


# THE EYE SHIELD



Issue 65

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## MESSAGE FROM ME

Greetings, fellow lovers of Knightmare, and welcome to the sixty-fifth issue of The Eye Shield. I think I may have dropped a mini bombshell last issue when I casually announced that TES will be coming to an end in July 2011 with its seventieth issue, so here are a few more details about this major announcement.

Rest assured that I am not doing this on a whim - after much careful consideration and soul searching, I really think that this will be the ideal time for TES to come to an end, not only because it will be rather neat for me to have produced a new issue every two months for exactly ten years, but mainly because every single one of Knightmare's characters, creatures, puzzles and quests will have been covered in the relevant sections (some more than once) and so Knightmare will have been fully chronicled within the hallowed pages of The Eye Shield.

After its initial demise in December 1997, I always wanted TES to be resurrected in some form because I thought that (after only nine issues) it had so much left to do - not only in terms of its regular features, but also as a forum for all the Knightmare stories and articles that fans were hopefully aching to write. (Of course, the website soon took over this role in the main, but still...) After ten web-based years, I really think TES will have done everything I wanted it to do. As I said last time, I will always be immensely pleased with and proud of TES, and I really hope that its archived issues will continue to be perused and enjoyed until the end of time, but in terms of new issues, the end is nigh.

For now, at least, I hope you will enjoy this particular issue, and when you've finished reading it, don't feel too sad - there are still five more to come! As ever, my thanks go out to the stalwart contributors who have helped me to fill this issue with so much Knightmare goodness, namely Ricky Temple, Andy Marshall, Louise Brockhouse, Ross Thompson, Chris Lunn and (last but not least) Rosey Collins.

My good buddy Ross "Raven's Eye" Thompson is always coming up with new and ingenious ways to make life a bit more fun - such as The Raven's Eye fanzine at <http://www.freewebs.com/ravenseyemag> - and his latest brainchild is the Knightmare Audio Series, which (perhaps not surprisingly) is a whole new series of Knightmare presented entirely in audio form! Read all about it and download the episodes at the following address: <http://knightmareaudioseries.webs.com>

### **Knightmare Audio Series:**

Devised and written by **Ross Thompson** and **Jake Collins**. Edited by **Ross Thompson**. Featuring **Jake Collins** as Treguard, Merlin, Granitas, Gumboil, McGrew and Hansel, **Ross Thompson** as Folly, Igneous, Mrs Grimwold and Mogdred, **Rosey Collins** as Gretel and Morghanna, **Greg Ford** as Olaf and Cedric, **Juliet Thompson** as Lillith, and **Gemma Dwarwood** as Velda. With **Andy Marshall**, **Jacob Ward** and members of the cast as dungeoneers and advisors.

## **KNIGHTMARE QI**

Here they are - the results of the last ever round of Knightmare QI!

**1. What action have these four people all performed onscreen? MILDREAD, HEGGATTY, PEGGATTY, CHRIS IV.**

**Answer:** Flown on a broomstick – MILDREAD (Episode 216), HEGGATTY (Episode 602), PEGGATTY (Episode 604 and others), CHRIS IV (Episode 615).

**2. Which is the first dungeoneer that can be seen climbing into a wellway?**

**Answer:** Danny (Team 4 of Series 1).

**Cliché:** Simon (Team 3 of Series 1), who did enter a wellway but could not be seen at the time because the room was in darkness.

**3. How many episodes feature two separate quests starting from the antechamber?**

**Answer:** 6 – Episode 101 (David and Maeve), Episode 106 (Helen I and Richard I), Episode 201 (Martin I and Claire), Episode 207 (Akash and Neil), Episode 301 (Gavin and Cliff) and Episode 801 (Richard III and Daniel).

**4. Which is the first dungeoneer to speak to Smirkenorff?**

**Answer:** Duncan (Team 8 of Series 5) – Duncan is the first dungeoneer to speak to Smirky directly ("Can you land?") and although Smirky does not respond verbally, he grants Duncan's request by setting down in Wolfenden.

**Cliché:** Matt (Team 1 of Series 6).

**5. During which scene can you see the effects of Hordriss's magic being undone by Merlin's magic?**

**Answer:** Episode 315, Martin's team casts CURE (Merlin's magic) to undo the effects of the spell that Hordriss has cast to make Motley dumb.

**6. In which episode is the phrase "Condition Amber" first mentioned with reference to the life force clock?**

**Answer:** Episode 201 – only Conditions Red and Green are mentioned (i.e. verbally) during the first series.

**Cliché:** Episode 101.

**7. During which series is the phrase "the Opposition" first used?**

**Answer:** Series 4.

**Cliché:** Series 5 – although this is the first series to make use of the phrase "the Powers That Be"!

**8. The Adventurers' Code stipulates that, unlike normal clue objects, "magical objects" can be carried on different levels, but which is the one and only object that ends up being carried through multiple levels under this rule?**

**Answer:** Dickon's Fifty-Year-Old Etruscan Brandy... or Hordriss's lizard-making potion, whichever you prefer to call it!

**9. How many dungeoneers summoned Hordriss with his calling name, Malefact, or at least a pretty close approximation of it?**

**Answer:** 4 – Helen II (Episode 403), Kelly II (Episode 516), Sumayya (Episode 603) and Nicola II (Episode 704).

**Cliché:** 5 – all of the above and Dickon (Episode 413).

**10. During the course of which episode do we learn that Smirkenorff can speak?**

**Answer:** Episode 502 – "He can speak if he chooses to, but I doubt if he'll deign to speak to someone who's yet to pass through the first level." – **Treguard**.

**Cliché:** Episode 601.

Rank	Name	Raw Score	Points Lost	Sub-total	Time Bonus	TOTAL SCORE
1.	Ross Thompson	37	0	37	4	41
2.	Drassil	38	0	38	0	38
3.	Gehn "Lex" Luthor	28	0	28	2	30
4.	Liam Callaghan	20	0	20	4	24

Congratulations, Ross - for the second time, you are the Knightmare QI champion, and you will remain so forevermore unless someone wants to run another round on the forum at some point! Now, as this is the final round,

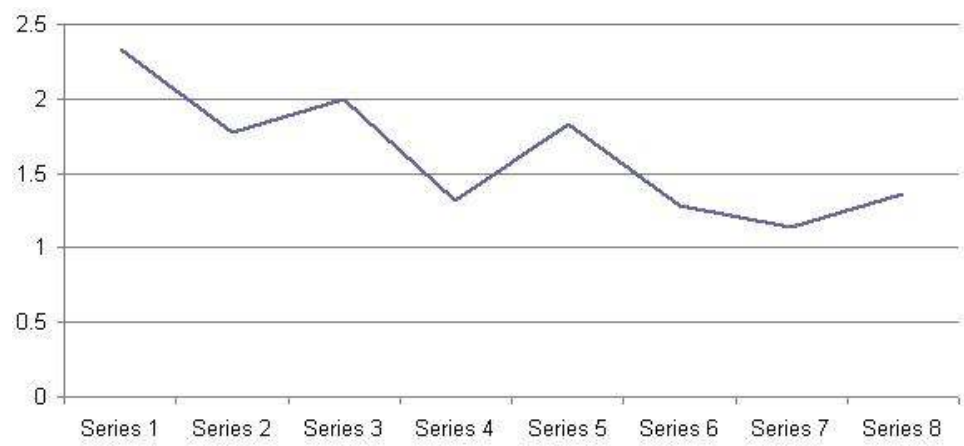
here is the Nightmare QI Parade of Champions:

DATE	NAME	WINNING SCORE	POTENTIAL SCORE
January 2007	Jake Collins	12	30
May 2007	Drassil	16	24
July 2007	Drassil (2)	30	40
September 2007	Drassil (3)	32	40
January 2008	Liam Callaghan	18	24
March 2008	Chris Stallard	37	40
May 2008	Ross Thompson	31	40
July 2008	Drassil (4)	37	40
September 2008	Lex Luthor	29	40
November 2008	Drassil (5)	39	40
January 2009	Drassil (6)	37	40
May 2009	Lex Luthor (2)	21	28
July 2009	Lex Luthor (3)	24	40
May 2010	Lex Luthor (4)	48	53
September 2010	Ross Thompson (2)	41	48

# KNIGHTMARE SERIES DIFFICULTY LEVELS

By Ross "Raven's Eye" Thompson

Dungeon scores	Dungeoneer wins	0		
	Dungeoneer dies in Level 3	1		
	Dungeoneer dies in Level 2	2		
	Dungeoneer dies in Level 1	3		
	Disrupted in Level 1	1.5		
	Disrupted in Level 2	1		
	Disrupted in Level 3	0.5		
	DIFFICULTY ORDER			
		Points	Teams	Average
HARDEST	Series 1	14	6	2.333333
	Series 3	24	12	2
	Series 5	16.5	9	1.833333
	Series 2	23	13	1.769231
	Series 8	9.5	7	1.357143
	Series 4	10.5	8	1.3125
	Series 6	9	7	1.285714
EASIEST	Series 7	8	7	1.142857
	SERIES ORDER			
		Points	Teams	Average
	Series 1	14	6	2.333333
	Series 2	23	13	1.769231
	Series 3	24	12	2
	Series 4	10.5	8	1.3125
	Series 5	16.5	9	1.833333
	Series 6	9	7	1.285714
	Series 7	8	7	1.142857
	Series 8	9.5	7	1.357143



## REMEMBER THIS?

Series 4/5/6/7/8. Level 2/3.

### THE CORRIDOR OF BLADES

Although this obstacle has by far the longest tenure of any Dungeon threat, it does not have anything like the greatest number of appearances or victims as it was used somewhat sporadically, unlike the (somewhat overused) causeways. However, when the Corridor of Blades did put in an appearance, we always knew we were in for an exciting time!

Series 4 was the only series in which it actually featured as a regular challenge. Who could forget that first moment when a buzzing circular saw started thundering down the corridor towards Alistair (which came as a complete surprise and a jarring shock, as the blade-free version of the corridor had already appeared twice in the series) to the sound of Pickle's urgent tones telling the advisors to take action, only for Alistair to be sawn in half a few seconds later as the entire team fell to pieces.

Perhaps going some way towards proving their worth as the series champions, Dickon's team later showed us how the Corridor of Blades should be done, while Giles had a very near miss with one of the blades and had to endure (perhaps as a consequence of this) the entire blade sequence running through twice! There was a strange but brief appearance of the blades during Simon's quest too, this time in level two rather than level three, but Gundrada was on hand to guide him safely, and they only had to move once anyway!

The Corridor of Blades appeared twice during series 5, but both teams were undoubtedly in losing status at the time, and I very much suspect that the obstacle was only included as a quick and interesting way of killing them off. This is undoubtedly the case with Duncan's team, who had trundled gaily past level two in the Descender, while Sarah's team - having dithered too long with their ruby and failed to gain Elita's help - didn't stand much of a chance either!



The Corridor made one appearance each in series 6 and 7, and it is during its series 6 appearance that the phrase "the Corridor of Blades" is first uttered, by Pickle in a suitably nervous tone. On this occasion, Sofia's generally brilliant team managed to complete the challenge successfully (just one of the many reasons why their quest was much harder than that of Ben's "winning" team that year) while during the final episode of series 7, Barry's team completed the tricky obstacle (albeit with an incredibly close shave) as part of their distinctly lengthy level three.

The Corridor of Blades returned for series 8, apparently residing in Marblehead now, and claimed its fourth victim in the shape of Daniel. Although this was quite a satisfying death, the fact that it happened at all is a tremendous shame in many ways and for many multifaceted reasons, but let's not go into that now. Similarly, let's not go into the travesty that is the Short Cut, which facilitated the Corridor's final two appearances, with Dunstan and Oliver. For reasons I'd rather not remember, they both entered the Corridor of Blades in level one (this was a so-called "second entrance" if you can believe that) and they both made it through to level three, although (like Giles and Barry before him) Dunstan had a very close shave and still managed to get through... and I think it's best not to say any more about that!

## ADVENTURE TIME

By Andy Marshall, Ricky Temple & Louise Brockhouse

The forest clearing was calm, with the sound of birdsong and a faint rustling of leaves in the wind. The only sign of anything of interest was the tall and blackened void of an elf path, standing prominently in the clearing's centre. After several moments of inactivity, Dean was ready to put the spyglass down when he spotted a shimmering in the depths of the portal, reaching out from its centre like ripples in a pond.

As Dean watched, two figures stepped from the path's depths into the clearing. The first was dressed in the manner of a gentleman of the Victorian era, complete with dark purple waistcoat, a cravat that bordered on the garish, and a woollen greatcoat. He had a small but neatly trimmed goatee, with darting eyes that flickered in excitement behind half-moon spectacles. When he spoke, he formed his words in a thick accent of the King's English that betrayed either a privileged background or strong academic leanings.

"Ah, smell that air!" he enthused. "Stepping out into a new realm, a whole world of possibilities stretched out before our eyes... I tell you, Edward, it's moments like these I live for."

"Not really ground-breaking stuff though is it, chief?" offered his companion, raising his darkened glasses to scrutinize his surroundings. "I mean, if I didn't know better, I'd say it was the New Forest."

His manner of dress was considerably less ostentatious - a leather jacket and jeans, his only nod to formality being a rumpled blue tie on a faded, white collared shirt. Dean found his accent harder to pin down than the first speaker - it seemed to be some strange amalgamation of English and American, with a slight Irish lilt that flittered interchangeably between each word.

"Well, Syrus DID say there were parts of the Great Underground Empire

that bore a passing resemblance to our world. Besides, you wouldn't expect our realm to have the monopoly on 'green vegetation' now, would you?" said the first speaker, who had removed his glasses and was now polishing them on the sleeve of his coat. "I imagine we'll be seeing plenty that will mark Quendor out as distinct. Quelbees, Hunguses-

"Grues."

At the mention of this seemingly innocuous word, the long-coated figure froze in mid polish. For a split second, a look of glazed panic crossed his face. When he spoke next, there was a slight falter in his voice.

"... yes. You... DID pack the lantern, didn't you?"

"Yup. And I've got my spellbook as well," assured Edward, tapping a black leather satchel that hung from his shoulder.

"Good. Let's hope we don't have the need to use either. Right," said the man in the greatcoat, bringing his palms together and rubbing them in a way that suggested deep thought, "down to business. If I were a brave but somewhat simple adolescent who fancies himself a hero-to-be, where would I think to seek out an Epic Adventure?"

"Oh, come on, that one's easy," said Edward without skipping a beat. "The pub."

"... the pub," said the man in the greatcoat flatly, as though his companion had just told him that goats were purple and tasted faintly of liquorice bananas.

"Think about it. Convenient stopover for parties of weary travellers, meeting place for all manner of shady ne'er-do-wells and dodgy geezers, comely wenches armed with all the local gossip - trust me Jules, I know how this stuff works. We find the nearest pub, odds are that our man Thaks will be there, probably being tasked by some old farmer to rid his radish patch

of Unusually Sized Rodents."

"That, and you fancy a drink."

"And I fancy a dr-" Edward began before he could stop himself. Catching Jules's raised eyebrow, he showed no sign of embarrassment. "Well, it IS lunchtime. And it takes it out of you, all this trans-dimensional jumping about. I'm sure I read somewhere that six pints at lunchtime was necessary for continued existence. Or something."

"Oh, all right," relented Jules, recognizing that this actually made some kind of sense - a strange, warped kind of sense that revolved around the concept of being near a place that served drinks, but a sense nonetheless. "Jones's omniscope picked out a town not too far away, somewhere called Wolfenden. We'll lurk for a bit, get the lay of the land, make a few discrete enquiries, and go from there."

"But remember Ed," continued Jules, his voice suddenly adopting a more authoritative tone, "we're here to find Thakbor, bring him back, and that's IT. No getting involved in Things That Are Bigger Than Us, and no partaking in Irresponsible Acts of Heroism. There's a time and a place for that sort of thing, and this is neither. Got it?"

"Got it. What about Charitable Acts of Goodwill and Generally Being a Helpful Bloke?"

"We'll play those by ear," said Jules, now smirking. "Come on you, I'll get the first round in."

"You're a gentleman and a scholar, chief," laughed Edward, and the two headed away from the clearing and out of the spyglass's field of vision.

"A strange twosome, to be sure!" said Treguard, observing the looks on the advisors' faces that indecisively flickered between amusement and pure confusion. "But certainly not a surprise. This realm, after all, acts as both a

mirror of history and a world between worlds, so naturally it sees its fair share of travellers, refugees and assorted vagrants - the flotsam and jetsam of causality, if you will. These two seem to be under the mistaken impression they are somewhere else entirely, however, when it's far more apparent that they hail from somewhere nearer, let us say, *your* end of the temporal spectrum..."

Seeing no more signs of activity on the spyglass, Dean placed it carefully onto the ground. As he did so, a horrifyingly familiar voice rang out over the courtyard.

"Well, well... so we meet again, Dungeoneer!"

With a flash of light that even lit up the inside of the Helm of Justice, the monstrously gigantic image of Malice appeared before Dean. Her sharpened tone betrayed both the obvious loathing in her voice, and her anger.

"And as promised, Dungeoneer: you *thwarted* me, so now I - *thwart* - YOU!!!"

Before the advisors could react, Malice had raised her hands and sent a thick plume of smoke from her fingers, engulfing Dean. Within seconds it had cleared, leaving empty space where he had once stood...

\*

Amazed to be alive and seemingly with all appendages attached, Dean stood up to find that he had been deposited on a high mountain ledge overlooking the Rift of Angar.

"Well, the good news is that you seem to have caught Malice in one of her more merciful moods," mused Treguard once vision had been re-established. "Unfortunately, team, in her case that's saying really very little. You appear to be stranded far away from your way to level two via the great wyrm Smirkenorff, and without any other means of transportation it looks very

much like your quest has come to an-"

Treguard never managed to finish his sentence as a black shadow suddenly loomed over Dean, enveloping him in darkness. The advisors started to panic but there was nowhere to direct Dean to go. The sound of beating wings filled the air and a large shimmering shape, resplendent in orange and golden hues, flew down into view...

It was clearly a dragon, though unlike Smirkenorff, who the team had expected to encounter, this one looked more serpentine in appearance. It peered at Dean, its expressions like those worn by all dragons - completely impossible for human eyes to comprehend.

"Warning, team, this is a Fire-Drake. They're notoriously unpredictable and it may be that you have strayed into its nesting site!" Treguard said, in a tone of voiced laced with doom.

"Need a lift, Dungeoneer?" piped up another, altogether more cheerful and carefree voice. The advisors looked perplexed for it was not the Fire-Drake who had spoken, but there was no one else in sight. With slow, calculated precision, the Fire-Drake turned so it was now side on to the ledge, and the advisors now saw who had spoken.

There was a saddle on the back of the dragon and seated in it was a young man. He was dressed in the armour of an Airwan but the thing that really drew the attention of the advisors was his eyes - a noticeable purple hue.

"I said, do you require a lift, Dungeoneer?" the young Dragon Rider reiterated.

"Hmm... caution, team," Treguard repeated, this time gruffly. "This is Drago Lestrade, and contrary to what his armour may lead you to believe he is not of the Airwan - at least, not anymore. He's a renegade and an unknown quantity in the greater game, which is saying nothing about the unsavoury and decidedly shady associates he counts as his friends. So his motives and

intentions must be highly suspect at all times. However, adversity makes for strange bedfellows and I can see no other way out of your current situation... so the choice is entirely yours, team."

"If you wish to ride on me, Dungeoneer," the majestic, booming voice of the Fire-Drake rang throughout the mountain range as it finally decided to speak, "then please state so quickly. I can not hover like this for long."

The advisors, after a hurried discussion which dealt briefly with the possibility of surviving a fifty-foot drop straight down the mountainside, decided they would have to risk trusting this pair and guided Dean towards Drago. He extended a hand and helped Dean up on to the Fire-Drake and into the saddle behind him.

"Welcome aboard Dungeoneer, and my apologies for Lokie's brusqueness back there, but he can be rather impatient at times."

"I assume the dungeoneer has something to pay us for this service? After all we will be going out of our way to help them," Lokie said, slight petulance breaking through into his tone.

"I have some Dragon Nip," Dean offered, sensing this would do the trick.

"Oh! Ah... ah yes... yeeeeees... uhmmm, well, filthy stuff you understand, not something you'll ever catch me indulging in, dear me no, but I suppose it will have to suffice," said Lokie, trying (and failing) to appear innocent.

Drago had to stifle a laugh. Turning to Dean, he said, "It's okay, Lokie is really rather partial to Dragon Nip... just that it's seen as a rather crass habit by dragons." Lokie grumbled haughtily at this in the manner that only dragons can manage, prompting Drago to laugh once more. "Just leave the Dragon Nip in the pouch in the saddle... and hold on."

Once Dean had placed the Dragon Nip in the pouch as instructed, Lokie took flight and flew off towards the beginning of level two, leaving the lonely

spire of the mountaintop behind them.

\*

Lokie flew for a number of minutes before landing in a field just short of the end of level one. "Here you go, young Dean," Drago said. "End of the line! 'Fraid we can't take you all the way into level two, but I and Lokie have someone to find here in level one."

"Well, to be precise, Drago... we think... the little urchin is in level one-" Lokie began, before being cut off by a sharp, meaningful cough from Drago.

Dean's advisors didn't take much notice of what Lokie was saying but Dean picked up on it. "Erm, excuse me, but are you perchance looking for a young girl called... Jan-Jan?" he ventured, hoping he'd remembered the strange girl's name correctly.

Drago looked at Dean in sudden interest. "Yes... why, you've seen her?"

"Yes, she was hanging around the ruins just outside of Queen Kalina's throne room. She was talking to the gargoyles, something about listening to the stones?"

Drago rolled his eyes. "Yeah, that sounds like Jan-Jan alright. Thanks for the tip, Dean; let me repay it with one for you. There's an agent of Fear lurking somewhere in level two. He's called Torenvalk. He can speak the language of the noble adventurer but doesn't know the true meaning of the code. You'll be able to recognise him because he's always got his raven-black falcon with him."

The advisors noted this down and Dean thanked Drago for the information, then his advisors guided him off Lokie. Dean then found himself standing in front of a bridge that led across a fast flowing river.

"Ah, the Wolf Track River," Treguard said. "Level two lies on the other side of this bridge; from here it's simply a case of crossing over."



The advisors guided Dean towards the bridge and started to guide him over it. However, as they did so they became aware that a figure was crossing the bridge from the opposite end, and whoever it was, they were heading straight for Dean... and they were very, very big. The figure drew closer and closer until it was level with Dean and blocking his path.

The figure was a giant robotic creature, standing close to seven foot tall. It had obviously been made to resemble some gross caricature of a knight with its metal body resembling a green tinted armour. But it had obviously not been well maintained, with telltale patches of rust all over it, and in some areas a disturbing collection of gears and crude electronics were protruding from its body. However, this only seemed heighten the sense of fear and intimidation that it caused.

"Dire warning team, for this is Dreadnort, one of Lord Fear's Techno monstrosities. Though it looks like its master has been neglecting to keep up with its maintenance. But even so, Dreadnort is still a deadly foe, so be careful."

"I... SEEK... A WORD!" boomed Dreadnort's metallic voice, sending chills down Dean's spine. "IF YOU GIVE ME THE *WRONG* WORD... IF YOU GIVE ME *NO* WORD... THEN I TAKE... A LIMB... INSTEAD! PERHAPS... AN ARM... PERHAPS... *A HEAD!!!!* I... SEEK... A WORD! GIVE - ME - A *WORD!!*"

The advisors quickly told dean to give Dreadnort the word Queen Kalina had given them.

"Duck soup!" Dean said quickly, his trembling voice completely inconsequential in comparison to that of the hulking monstrosity.

"THAT... IS... THE *CORRECT* WORD." Dreadnaught boomed. "PASS FRIEND. AND LIVE... IN... *FEAR!!*" This said, Dreadnort started walking away from Dean.

"Hmm, I wonder how much longer that metal abomination will continue to function without repair," Treguard mused as Dreadnort vanished from sight. Once the advisors were sure Dreadnort had gone, they guided Dean the rest of the way over the bridge and into level two.

\*

"Well done, team! With Level one behind, some small measure of progress has been made. But it would be foolish to take pride in such a meagre accomplishment, when there is so much more of your journey still ahead. Your path has taken you to the ruins of Dungarth. Travel to level three can be found amidst its lower levels. But first, you must find safe passage through the castle, for Dean is not the only living thing that stirs within these walls..."

Dean stepped through a crumbling archway into a room that stretched off into the distance. A long oaken table dominated the room's furnishing, and the advisors quickly deduced that this must have served as the castle's Great Hall. At the head of the table, where the ruling Lord of the castle would have held his repasts, was a familiar cluster of objects, denoting that this room now served as the level's clue room.

Guiding Dean over to the objects, the advisors quickly examined his choices - a potion with shimmering blue liquid contents labelled "TELEPORT", a bag of green tablets marked "dried frogs pills", a ruby, a ball of twine and a scroll. Taking the scroll and opening it revealed the words: "Don't lose yours, send him on his."

"Well, what does THAT mean?" said one advisor, obviously stumped.

"Something referring to both... could it be way?" said another

"Don't lose your way, send him- yes, yes that's it! Well, you would use twine to keep track of where you were in a maze, and sending... Dean, take the twine and the potion."

Dean obliged, and was quickly guided out of the room. He found himself being guided down a spiralling staircase until he found himself in a crypt, with exits leading north and east. As he stepped away from the staircase, a loud clattering behind him swiftly blocked off the path he had taken.

Before the advisors could decide on what exit to take, their discussion was interrupted by a titanic roar from the north, accompanied by rumbling footsteps that shook the castle to its very foundation. Before Dean could react, a man clad in armour and a cloak burst into the crypt from the north and proceeded to slam the exit's wooden door shut, leaning against it and panting in clear exhaustion.

Looking closer, the advisors were surprised to see the man was in fact a youth, no older than seventeen. His clothes were caked in mud and grime, and from his belt hung a spyglass. His face wore an expression of both panic and sheer exhilaration.

"Everything alright?" said Dean, trying to strike up a conversation.

"AHH!" yelled the young man, and quickly waved his sword in Dean's direction. After several seconds' worth of a confused expression, he lowered it again, looking rather sheepish.

"Sorry about that," he apologised. "Force of habit. Been doing it a lot today. Seems everyone I come across down here is some nasty goblin person who immediately wants to kill me. Dunno why. You... DON'T want to kill me, do you?"

"Erm, no," said Dean. "My name's Dean, I'm a dungeoneer."

"Ah, good-good. Only I'm not that up on the whole 'killing' part of this hero thing. Especially when the things trying to kill me are two storeys high with pointy teeth. They tend to get more annoyed than anything. Still, it is but one more challenge for Thakbor the Incredible to overcome."

The name triggered something in Dean's memory, which was quickly confirmed by one of the advisors. "Did you say your name was Thakbor?"

"That's right!" said the youth, and puffed his pigeon chest out in a pose that tried its best to resemble pride. "Thakbor the Incredible, brave hero of this world, champion of the downtrodden and oppressed, noble knight of-"

"You're from the twenty-first century, aren't you?" deadpanned Dean.

Thakbor blinked, his train of thought suddenly derailed. "Well... yes. Kind of," he mumbled feebly. "How did you-"

"I saw a couple of guys looking for you. One in a long coat with a goatee, another in a leather jacket."

"The professors!" cried Thakbor, slapping his forehead in shock. "I forgot to tell them! Are they angry? I didn't want to cause any trouble-"

"Don't worry," said Dean. "They're in a place called Wolfenden, having a drink. They seem to think you'll turn up there eventually."

"Yes," nodded Thakbor, "I bet it was Master Edward who came up with that idea. I was there not long ago, you see. I didn't want to go far - just see what was on the other side of the portal - but then I got to talking with this serving girl, she wanted someone to brave the Ruins of Dungarth and kill half a dozen Malodorous Goblin Whelps - don't ask me why, I'm pretty sure it made sense at the time - and since then, I haven't been able to find my way out, and it's cold and dark and she didn't say anything about the big skull on legs who's been chasing me for hours, and-"

"So you want to get out of here, is that it?" asked Dean, cutting him off before the youth asphyxiated on his own panic.

"That *would* be nice," said Thakbor. "Not that I'm not loving every minute of it, mind you, getting the chance to be a proper mighty warrior and all, but

it DOES have very big teeth. Bit beyond my level, that."

"Here," said Dean, deciding he had heard enough. He held out the TELEPORT potion, which Thakbor took. "This will take you out of here."

"Wow! That's awfully kind of you," said Thakbor gratefully. "There's not really much down here in the way of loot, but I did find this old thing. I planned on keeping it for Professor Julian, he likes old stuff like this, but it's the least I can do."

Dean took the spyglass that Thakbor offered, and watched as he uncorked the potion and took a sip.

"So, how does this wo-" he began, before vanishing from sight with the faintest of pops.

Hoping for a brief moment that the potion had sent the young hero-to-be to the right place, Dean was advised to examine the spyglass...

\*

"It's all very well telling me that it's sheer blind luck, Sinstar, but two successive dungeoneers managing to infiltrate as far as the second level makes for more than a mere coincidence-"

"And if you will recall, My Lord, it was *I* who dispatched the mouthy little whelp. I will do so once again. And I can assure you, it will not be the work of a mere coincidence. See for yourself!"

With a wave of the sorceress's hand, Lord Fear's view screen was filled with images of a room in which chaos reigned. Pieces of the floor dropped away leaving gaping pits, slabs of wall spun across the room at impossible speeds and embedded themselves in the opposite sides.

"Nothing but both precision and a fleetness of foot will ensure survival. And I believe that this Dean that irks you so possesses neither."

"Well now," said a smiling Lord Fear, "I've always said that feng shui was good for the soul. Let us hope you are correct in your assumptions, Sinstar. I would hate for such a promising track record to be broken so early in the game." He stood, straightening his robes. "As for me, I have some wheels to set in motion..."

Before Dean could hear any more, the advisor's screen began flickering bright orange, and he began feeling an intense heat from the spyglass. He was quickly told to drop the spyglass, which he promptly did. Before they could properly understand what they had seen, a sudden crashing was heard from the north, coupled with a splintering of the locked door.

"It would seem that your young warrior's tormentor has caught up with you!" said Treguard. "Exit with haste, lest you be devoured by the catacombite!"

Not needing to be told twice, Dean was quickly guided out east, catching a glimpse through the splintered door of thrashing bone...

\*

Dean now found himself in a strange looking room, one that his advisors quickly recognised as the same as they had seen in Lord Fear's view screen barely moments before.

"Dean, you're in that Block and Tackle room that Lord Fear was talking about," one of his advisors informed him.

"Caution team, your surroundings are very unstable. Be fleet of foot and sure in your directions or your quest will surely be over," Treguard advised the team in an ominous tone.

Almost as soon as these words had left the Dungeon Master's lips, a fearful rumble emitted from the floor under Dean's feet, followed by an even more terrifying sound - the cracking of stone. There was then a rush of wind as

part of the floor mere inches to the right of Dean suddenly fell away into a deep black void.

This spurred the advisors into action. "Dean, forward quickly!" one of them yelled. Dean quickly obeyed and started hurrying forward, just as another of the sickening cracking sounds filled the air. This time the floor almost right in front of Dean fell away.

"STOP!" cried the advisors, and Dean skidded to a stop just in time. "LEFT, LEFT!" came the instructions, quickly and laced with obvious panic. Dean started moving to the left as yet more rumbling started. "Forward, QUICK," one of the advisors yelled in a rapid staccato.

However, the advisors had forgotten the other element of the Block and Tackle...

This time a slab of wall from the opposite side of the room flew out and before the advisors could react, it slammed into Dean and sent him flying into the black void that had opened up alongside him. Within the space of a second, Dean had vanished from their sight, his screams quickly fading as the abyss took him for its own.

"Oh dear, what a pity", Treguard sighed. "I'm afraid that Dean and, therefore, your quest have come to a sticky end. You did well, but your memory failed you. You had all the information you needed to survive the Block and Tackle, but you let fear overrule your thought process, and when that happens, fear will always triumph."

The team nodded sadly.

"But come now team, follow me and allow me to guide you for the final time," said Treguard, as he led the team towards a door that lead out of the antechamber and onto a path. "This path will lead you safely home. And don't worry about Dean, he's already been set upon this path a little further up; you'll surely catch him up. Now - farewell!"

The team nodded and left the antechamber, and headed off along the path, disappointed, yet glad for the opportunity that very few had be given.

"So, the Opposition claims another victory, but The Powers That Be are not beaten yet. There's still time to put paid to Lord Fear and his minions in this phase of adventure. Another would-be champion is now at the threshold, so... ENTER, STRANGER!"

\*

The next dungeoneer to brave the Dungeon in this phase was a young warrior maiden called Amy. She was a tall, blonde girl with glasses and green eyes. However, this quest did not follow the same starting pattern as her predecessors'. Amy had called her advisors and, following the usual introductions, was ready to enter the Dungeon when Treguard's magic mirror began making a low humming sound, indicating an incoming communication.

The image of the warlock Hordriss appeared in the mirror. "Treguard, can you hear me? One wishes to speak to you on a matter most urgent!"

"Hordriss, this is not the most convenient of times. I'm just about to set a young dungeoneer upon the path-"

"Listen to me, Dungeon Master," Hordriss said, abruptly cutting Treguard off. "The Opposition has committed a most heinous act of treachery and infamy. One's own daughter Sidriss has been kidnapped by that vile Techno Sorceress and her equally vile Goblin Master of a brother. I must insist that the current dungeoneer is assigned to rescue her."

Treguard sighed. "Hordriss, with all due respect, the dungeoneer has not chosen a quest object to redeem yet. To assign her to rescue your daughter would mean she could not complete a quest and her journey would be in vain."

"Not so, Dungeon Master," Hordriss corrected. "You forget that in times past, young adventures quested to Free the Maid. This young warrior maiden



can do the same."

Treguard nodded thoughtfully "There is truth in what you say, I suppose... but you understand, it must be young Amy's choice. What say you, Amy? Will you accept this quest to Free the Maid, Sidriss?"

"I will," Amy responded, without hesitation.

"Very well then," Treguard said. "Turn then, and step boldly forward into your adventure."

\*

Amy stepped through the door into the Dungeon realm and strangely found herself not in the Hall of Choice, but in one of the level one clue rooms.

"Since you have already chosen your quest," Treguard explained, "the Dungeon has made the appropriate adjustment and moved you forward to a suitable replacement starting point; and it seems supplies are to be found here."

The advisors guided Amy towards the table; upon it lay an apple, a feather, an egg timer, a crossbow bolt and a bar of gold. Amy picked up the apple and placed it in her knapsack. As she did so she became aware of a hissing sound, like that of an angry cat.

"Stand still, Amy, you've awoken this chamber's guardian."

The far wall started to change, morphing and contorting into a myriad of grotesque friezes, until the feline face of the wall monster Catama appeared.

"MEEEEEAOWWWWWW! Stand still, thief!" she mewed angrily. "Nothing may be taken from Catama's chamber without earning it."

"Like all wall monsters, Catama will test your knowledge, team. You must

answer her riddles correctly in order to pass and potentially gain useful information."

"The testing begins now, *meeeeaooowww!* Here is my first. I build up castles. I tear down mountains. I make some men blind, I help others to see. What am I?"

The advisors conferred. "Build up castles, tear down mountains?" one of them mused. "Amy, try sand, it's the only thing that builds castles and yet can also tear down mountains. Erosion," she added by way of explanation.

"Sand", repeated Amy.

"Purrrr... Truth accepted. Here is my second: I cover what's real, hide what is true, but sometimes bring out the courage in you. What am I?"

One of the advisors blushed. "I know this one... cos I'm wearing the answer. Amy, it's make-up."

"Make-up," Amy repeated.

"Purrrr... Truth accepted. Here is my third and final. I pass before the sun, yet make no shadow. What am I?"

This one seemed to stump the advisors, but Amy managed to work it out for herself. "You're the wind," she said confidently.

"Purrrr! Truth accepted. Three's the score... you may know more. Time will be your friend."

"Remember, team," reminded Treguard, "with a full score you can command her and she must obey."

"I command you!" Amy said.

"Meeeeaooowww, very well. Her trust can not be bought, but the right token can buy your way past her. Now, stone I was and stone I become... Meeeeaooowww!"

With one final cry, the face of Catama faded back into the wall. The team immediately decided on the egg timer and then - after a brief discussion - also took the crossbow bolt.

"Hurry, team, exit with some haste, lest Catama decides to test you some more!" Treguard advised.

The team quickly guided Amy out of the room. Amy stepped out of the doorway and almost immediately she heard what sounded like a giant match being struck, and then something fizzling.

"CHAMBER MINED!" Treguard intoned. "The fuse is burning quickly, your time can be measured in seconds!"

The team started to panic - it would take the best part of twenty seconds to cross the floor, but the fuse was burning quickly... too quickly. Fortunately, one of the advisors kept her head. "Amy, put the egg timer on the floor!"

Amy quickly did as instructed. Immediately, the fuse started to burn slower. The advisors quickly guided Amy out of the room, and to their shock found themselves in yet another mined chamber. Thankfully this one had a longer fuse and, though panicked, they managed to guide Amy out of this second chamber quickly.

\*

Amy next found herself in the throne room of the self-professed ruler of level one, Queen Kalina, who was studying a large book.

"It seems, Amy, that you have found yourself in the presence of Dungeon royalty... or at least one who believes she is such," Treguard chuckled. "This

is Queen Kalina, the self-proclaimed ruler of level one. Not one of the Powers That Be but also not a direct threat... if handled correctly."

Kalina, engrossed in her book but clearly aware of someone else in the room, didn't even glance over at Amy before she spoke.

"Ah, at last, my new Lady in Waiting," Kalina said in a satisfied tone. "You're a little late but I can overlook that as it's your first day of service. Now fetch me the small silver box from over there," Kalina said, indicating a table on the opposite side of the room. "I have matters to attend to."

The advisors were at a loss as to what to do.

"It may be best to humour Queen Kalina for now, team," Treguard advised, "for her temperament is one of unpredictability in any given circumstances."

The advisors guided Amy over to the table and she retrieved the silver box Kalina had asked for. The team then guided Amy back over to Kalina.

"Here you are, Your Majesty," Amy said, even curtsying slightly to Kalina.

Kalina looked up, at the same time reaching for the box. "Thank you-" she began, before actually looking at Amy; for a brief moment she seemed confused. "... oh. You're not my new Lady in Waiting.... you're a dungeoneer. Well, you might have said," Kalina said, a little irritated.

"I'm sorry, Your Majesty," Amy said as she curtseyed again, "but you looked very busy... I didn't want to interrupt you."

"Hmmm. It's a pity that you're not my new Lady in Waiting; you have such impeccable manners and you're not too shabby looking. I don't suppose you'd be interested in the position all the same?" Kalina asked.

"Thank you, Your Highness, but I am on a quest at this moment in time," Amy responded, not won over by the prospect of tending to this woman's

every whim.

"Ah, well then, perhaps you can perform for me one more service, Dungeoneer... what is your name, by the way?"

"Amy," Amy responded.

"Well Amy, there is an artefact in level two that I wish to obtain. If you would do me the service of agreeing to redeem it for me, I would reward you quite handsomely with some magic to aid you in your quest. Are we in agreement?"

The advisors discussed this before passing on their decision to Amy.

"I agree to do you this service, Your Majesty," Amy replied.

Kalina smiled. "Excellent! I can see you will represent my royal person very well. Now, the artefact that I seek is a bronze chalice engraved with the image of a dragon entwining a human... this is the symbol of the Airwan. Once you have the chalice, call my name three times. I shall gift you half your payment now, for it may help you to reach your goal. I gift you the spell SNAP. It is an offensive spell, so use it only when you need to."

Amy nodded in understanding.

"Very well, may good fortune attend you. When you exit my throne room, take the door on the left. It will lead you out into the Greenwood and from there you can make your way to level two. Now go; you have my royal protection while you remain in my kingdom."

Queen Kalina returned her attention to her book. Amy's advisors directed her out of the room and through the door which Kalina had indicated.

\*

Amy stepped through the door. For a moment there was nothing but

darkness to be seen before she passed through the magic portals of the realm and found herself standing in the middle of Greenwood. Hundreds of trees surrounded the young dungeoneer and first of all there appeared to be nothing and no one else. There was no clear path to follow and the gaps between the trees could lead her in a hundred wrong directions. Not that she could see any of this but the three guides exchanged puzzled looks. Sunlight broke through the overcast sky briefly, though not enough to break through the shade of the trees that stood around and above the dungeoneer.

"I see you have found yourself in the Greenwood team, though I must admit I find myself as confused as you appear. It seems we are a little lost."

"Where am I?" Amy asked, a little puzzled by the fact none of her guides had said anything to her yet, and the unnerving silence of the woods was beginning to get to her.

"You are in the Greenwood but the path ahead is not clear yet."

Just as Amy's guide had finished talking, there was the sound of a young woman's voice calling in the distance.

"And it appears that you would not be the only ones," Treguard stated, as he sat back upon his chair.

The calling woman gradually grew closer, yelling, "Jan-Jan! Jan-Jan!"

Seconds passed by. There was the sudden startling sound of a twig snapping in half and then a grumble of frustration, though no one yet appeared.

"Jan-Jan! If you do not appear in the next ten seconds I am going to turn you into a wall rug!"

Despite the woman's words her voice hinted at concern rather than seeking whoever Jan-Jan was for dastardly deeds. Suddenly, at Amy's right side,

the woman emerged from behind a tree, her dark blue eyes settling on the female dungeoneer for a moment, filled with hope and then dimming again.

"Well, you are certainly not Jan-Jan. Where did you come from?"

Amy and her guides practically fell as they were startled by the surprising closeness of the female. Treguard chuckled lightly and rose to his feet. He circled the guides and their mirror as he stroked his moustache thoughtfully.

"There is no need to be alarmed, team. This young female shall certainly not bring any harm to you. This would be Midnight. She used to be a servant of the Powers That Be, but alas she had a different path set before her and was unable to resist following it. Though that does not mean she shall will harm you - in fact I am more than willing to bet she would be willing to help... if you ask nicely enough."

The woman waited patiently, fully aware of what was probably going on as Amy remained silent, waiting for advice on whether she was friend or foe. Midnight was a little taller than Amy, being only five foot and one inch tall. Long black hair came down to her waist and she wore dark clothing. Unlike many of the females in the realm, she wore a pair of full length trousers and a long sleeved shirt that was cinched at the waist. The odd thing about her was the blue pendant that glowed just above her heart, and the fact that she was walking barefoot.

"Amy, there is a black-haired woman standing just to your left. She is called Midnight and hopefully means no harm. Say who you are and ask who or what Jan-Jan is."

"My name is Amy and I am a dungeoneer on a mission to find the maid."

"A pleasure to meet you, Miss Amy. I am not sure if Treguard will have informed your team yet but my name is Midnight, and which maid would you be trying to find?"

"I am trying to find Sidriss."

"What information do you have on this matter?"

Amy paused a moment, unsure whether she should give the stranger any more details.

"I would not take too long to discuss where you are, team. You may be in safe hands with her, but other beings trespass along this way."

The guides quickly decided to let Amy inform Midnight of what she knew. "She was taken by the ones called Skarkill and Sinister."

"You mean Skarkill and his sister Sinstar?"

Amy nodded.

"Well then, perhaps we can come to an agreement. I shall help you find Miss Sidriss if you help me find my adopted daughter, Jan-Jan."

Treguard chuckled at the very idea. "I would advise some element of caution here team, before you accept this offer of aid. While Midnight herself shall not harm you, her adopted daughter Jan-Jan is extremely unpredictable even in her mother's presence."

Amy's guides glanced at each other uncomfortably but all three nodded their heads at the unspoken question between them.

"Amy, say yes."

"Yes, I shall help."

Midnight smiled and offered the dungeoneer a hand to hold to guide her through the woods faster.



"Thank you, your help will be most welcome. Though I should warn you that Jan-Jan can be a little unpredictable and she tends to desire things that are shiny."

Amy laughed quietly at the information and the sound echoed within the helmet. The pair walked together for a couple of minutes until Midnight spotted the familiar rectangular sight of an elf portal.

"I believe that we are in for a bit of luck. Keep your hand in mine; we are about to enter an elf portal."

Seconds passed and the guides could only watch as the two walked hand in hand into the mysterious shape of darkness, and reappeared standing on a high cliff top. There were the faint sounds of hissing and growling. Midnight quickly released Amy's hand as she let out a loud scream of frustration. Near the edge of the cliff was a small, black-haired, waif of a girl trying to free herself from someone who was currently holding her. The guides could see the little wild thing was actually trying to scratch and bite her captor.

Trying to keep a firm grip of Jan-Jan was the Opposition member Snapper-Jack, although it was not made easy by the red dragon head puppet he appeared to have for a hand.

"Well team, it appears you have found even more trouble and I would wager by Midnight's protective reaction that you have found Jan-Jan also. I would observe for now before dashing in to help. Things could get quite messy... though I am not sure who I would feel sorry more for - the female or Snapper-Jack, who appears to have tried biting off more than he can chew..."

Amy spoke as she felt the freedom of her hand, and could only hear the sounds of hissing and spitting. "Where am I?"

"You appear to be on top of a cliff; we may have found Jan-Jan but she is

being held by someone called Snapper-Jack. Just stay where you are for now, Amy."

Midnight growled at the pair as she moved closer in a defensive manner, though being cautious of the cliff edge that was behind the pair. Her mouth appeared to have altered slightly, where two fangs protruded from between her lips, and her human eyes had become catlike slits. A deep blue hue started to surround her form.

"I would suggest you get Amy to stand back, team. Midnight may have a fair temper but when angered she can be quite... vicious."

"Release her, Snapper-Jack!"

Snapper-Jack glanced up at the approaching female as if noticing her for the first time, and almost his grip on Jan-Jan. "She failed three riddles. I get to take the fool."

Midnight was about to challenge the man to another game, but suddenly she froze, as did Amy, Snapper Jack and Jan-Jan too.

"Ah, how unfortunate for such a happening to come now. We have reached temporal disruption... not that it means much to you three?" Treguard glanced at the frozen guides. "No, too late once again...."

## PUZZLE PAGE ONE

Here are some questions I made up to use in place of Nightmare riddles whilst playing the board game with my best friend Ross "Raven's Eye" Thompson. They are designed to be accessible to a keen yet not encyclopaedic Nightmare fan, so if you don't get at least half of them right, you should not be reading this fanzine!

### TEAMS:

- > What is the name of the first dungeoneer to reach level three?
- > What is the name of the final dungeoneer to attempt level two?
- > Name the hapless male dungeoneer with advisors Tanya, Carrie and Kirsten.
- > What fraction of the winning teams are all-boy teams?
- > By far the most common team gender combination is four boys, but which is the least common boy/girl mix?
- > Name any two female dungeoneers from the first three series.

### CHARACTERS:

- > Who is the first character to appear on level two?
- > Name two characters that appear in exactly 4 out of the 8 series.
- > Which two characters wear exactly identical costumes?
- > Name one character who appears on levels one and three, but not level two.
- > Treguard appears in all 112 episodes of Nightmare, but which character is next on the list of the greatest number of episodes appeared in?
- > Other than Treguard, which character's first ever episode and last ever episode are furthest apart, i.e. whose episode spread is second only to Treguard's (101-810)?

## CLASSIC QUEST

**Series 8.**

**Quest:** The Sword of Freedom.

**Dungeoneer:** Michael.

**Advisors:** Ben, Ben and Hayden.

**Home town:** Bristol.

**Team score:** 6 out of 10.

Despite my continuing enjoyment of Treguard's very informal greeting to the dungeoneer ("Alright, Mike!") this is one of my least favourite quests ever, I'm afraid. The advisors are very objectionable and always squabbling and/or insulting each other, but that's not the worst of it - in terms of production, it's a horrible, jumbled, mistake-ridden mess that looks like it's been cobbled together by a particularly stupid monkey with a broken typewriter.

**Level One:** A meeting with Brother Strange in the new-look dwarf tunnel (or green corridor with arches, whichever you prefer to call it) sets up a very familiar trade - a proverb in return for a spyglass. Despite his chagrin at being offered *"Too many cooks spoil the broth"* yet again, Strange is very impressed by the team's next suggestion - *"The road to Hell is paved with good intentions"* - and hands over the spyglass. Lord Fear and Lissard are seen discussing the rune look, and Lissard reveals his idea for a new combination - all the even values going down followed by all the odd values going up.

In the clue room, Mike picks up a bar of gold (despite the fact that he and his advisors think it's a gold case at first - how can they make that old mistake, after all this time?) and an hourglass, which is seemingly a very sensible decision as the scroll has told him to keep his eye on the clock. Fireball Alley follows, and if Tim Child and friends had been meaning to speed up the fireballs so that the hourglass could be turned over to stop them or slow them down, they obviously forgot all about it! The obstacle is negotiated with no problems, before a quick (and somewhat pointless) chat with Stiletta leads on to the trapdoor room - yes, already!

Making his only appearance in this series, Rothberry sells Mike a FLOAT spell in exchange for the gold. Mark Knight does a good job of bringing the scene to life somewhat, but even he can do little to draw our attention away from the fact that this is a very standard, boring exchange. Rothberry helps Mike to open the trapdoor by standing on it, the FLOAT spell is cast, and Mike falls into level two. So what happened to the rune lock? Weren't they supposed to need that combination? And what about the hourglass - what was that for? Oh dear, what a total shambles!

**Level Two:** One of the chambers of Goth presents the team with another array of clue objects. A spyglass sequence reveals that one of the skeletrons has gone rogue, and is preventing any travel between level two and level three. Lord Fear mentions the ingredients for a spell he wants to brew in order to destroy the skeletron (plain berries, bat's wing and a binding spell, which apparently only Sidriss has access to!) but it doesn't take a genius to realise that the team will be the ones in need of the FILLET spell, not Lord Fear himself. They wisely decide to take a plastic bat from the clue table, but unwisely decide to reject a bottle of Brain Pills in favour of a sheaf of Stinkwort, which they do not end up using.

There has been a fair bit of discussion in the past about whether they were supposed to take the Brain Pills or not, as the scroll clue is somewhat ambiguous - *"Dangerous to those who are not dim"* could mean that they were supposed to leave the Brain Pills alone (as was their reasoning) but it could just as easily mean that they should pick up the pills and give them to someone who *is* dim, i.e. Sidriss. It was only very recently - while I was doing an audio commentary with Rosey for this particular episode - that it finally came to me what was probably supposed to happen: they were supposed to take the pills and give them to Sidriss in return for the binding spell! But they were given the chance of a reprieve (saving Sidriss from Snapper-Jack) in very much the same way that (a couple of episodes later) Dunstan was allowed to tell Motley a joke instead of returning his bauble, which the team had decided to leave behind in the clue room.

So it is that, in the Sewers of Goth, Mike answers Sidriss's third question from Snapper-Jack and earns himself a boat ride and a KNOT spell as a reward. The Sliding Floor Chamber follows, where a bunch of berries is conveniently waiting, supporting the theory that the team should have used their other object (i.e. given the pills to Sidriss) by this point. Snapper-Jack reappears and chases Mike across the chamber, finally catching up with him in the next room. Unsurprisingly, he asks his customary three riddles, and the team manages to answer two correctly. With a prompt from Treguard, they decide to make up the FILLET spell before leaving the chamber. Mike puts down the bat and the berries, the KNOT spell is cast, and so the FILLET spell is created - as the advisors point out, it's not a particularly interesting scene!

In the next chamber, Mike finally encounters the rune lock, which we were promised way back at the start of level one! Using the code Lissard mentioned (though it seems like this happened in a previous life!) Mike dispels the slabs successfully, and is chased out of the chamber by a troll, which does add a nice bit of tension to the scene. The trapdoor chamber follows, where the rogue skeletron is immediately destroyed by the FILLET spell. Then the advisors make a fatal error - they cannot decide whether to take Mike down the trapdoor (which they know leads to level three!) or out of the open door. Okay, so it's pretty weird that they haven't been given a FLOAT spell (or another means of falling safely) taking into account the usual trapdoor procedure in this series, but there really is no excuse for straying from the path so wantonly: *"FLOAT spell or no FLOAT spell, there was only one way down to level three, and you didn't take it."* - **Treguard**. As soon as he is standing in front of the door, Mike is fricasseed by a random fireball, bringing a swift end to a very strange quest.

**Summary:** However you cut it, this is a weird, weird quest, which in some ways is a microcosm of series 8 - jumbled, messy and not all that enjoyable to watch!

## THE WICKEDEST SHOW IN THE REALM

By Ricky Temple

Zyssa and Rio quickly loaded Kest's lifeless body into the back of the buggy, then set off once more for Reliance House. During the journey, they kept a lookout for the black wagon that had been tailing them. They knew it had sped past where they had been hidden.

"The driver must have realised by now that we pulled some kind of trick on him. He'll either have turned back to retrace his steps or he'll be hiding somewhere along this road, so just keep your eyes open, Zyssa," Rio said.

However, throughout the journey they never saw a sign of the wagon. Finally they reached Reliance House. They pulled in through the main gates. As they did so, however, they failed to notice the black wagon that was executing what someone from the realm of the dungeoneers would describe as a U-turn, having emerged from some hidden spot. The maneuver completed, it took off down the road at great speed.

Rio and Zyssa pulled up outside the main door of Reliance House and dismounted from the buggy. The two militiamen on guard outside saluted them.

"Sergeant," Rio said, addressing one of them. "Keep an eye on the buggy and, er... make sure he doesn't get away," he said, indicating the dead Kest. He continued up the steps to the door, where Zyssa was waiting with a disapproving look on her face.

"I heard that, Rio," she scolded him.

"Heard what?" he said innocently.

"You know perfectly well what!" she snapped, as they entered the house. "That distasteful remark you just made."

"Just a little dark humour, Zyssa," Rio said airily "It helps to lighten situations like this."

"Hmm, well, I don't think it's funny," Zyssa said, but let the matter drop.

Soon they were sitting in the main room of Reliance House with Ariel Martinez, discussing both the killings and the recent developments involving the mysterious - and now deceased - Mr Kest, and his apparent connection to the Opposition.

"If this is some kind of Opposition gambit then we need to have Treguard send some more help down here," Ariel said.

"And we can dispense with that Inquisitor Finley's services as well!" Zyssa added.

"Hmm," Rio said, unsure. "I don't think we should jump to any conclusions here."

Zyssa looked at him. "Rio... that Kest had a frightknight ring and he tried to kill us - what more proof do you need that the Opposition is involved?"

Rio sighed and looked at Zyssa. "There is another reason that Mr Kest might have targeted us..." Rio said, holding his metal hand up in front of her face and then tapping it on the arm of her chair so it made a dull metallic sound. "Remember?" he said pointedly.

Zyssa bit her bottom lip. "Sorry, Rio," she said quietly.

"I'm something of a target for any cutthroat or bounty hunter looking to make a name for himself in the ranks of the Opposition."

"So are you saying, Rio, that you don't believe these killings have anything to do with the Opposition?" Ariel asked.



"I'm saying I think that until we get more definitive proof that these killings are Opposition-linked, and that Kest wasn't just some Opposition minnow looking to become a big fish, we need to keep an open mind."

Ariel nodded. "I would agree, but it cannot be ruled out either. From the little I know of the Cossgrove Fiend, he has worked for the Opposition in the past."

Rio nodded.

"Did you discover anything of these other killings in your research?" Ariel asked.

Zyssa shook her head as she placed the relevant scrolls and files on the table in front of Ariel. "No, nothing... at least, nothing obvious."

"By the way, Ariel, what about all the broken crockery from the two killings here? Has it been collected yet?" Rio asked.

Ariel nodded. "It took longer than expected, so I had it brought here instead of sending it to your inn," she explained, indicating for some of her men to fetch the requested items.

The men returned shortly, carrying two boxes of broken crockery. Rio and Ariel went over to the boxes and started sifting through them, while Zyssa once more poured over the scrolls and files. A couple of hours passed in silence and concentration for the three Powers That Be agents. This silence was suddenly broken by Rio.

"Wait a moment!" he suddenly said, causing Zyssa and Ariel to jump slightly. "That piece of china you just had in your hands, Ariel... where did you put it?"

Ariel looked about on the table for the requested piece. She found it and picked it up; it was part of a face. Rio took it from her and placed it

alongside the piece he had in his own hands, which was an upper torso in uniform.

"They're from the same ornament," Ariel said.

"Exactly," Rio said. "Some kind of military figure, and there was one in both of the houses that the Fiend broke into in Glameldal... I think we may have found the answer to one of our questions... Zyssa, is there any mention in those files of exactly what was smashed in the other two killings?"

Zyssa leafed through all the files, looking for the information Rio had requested. She found a small piece of parchment related to the second killing. She read through it and smiled.

"Nothing about the first one, but someone did write down what was smashed in the second house... and the third item mentioned is a *military themed ornament depicting a Powers That Be pikeman*."

Rio looked at the pieces he had in his hand and smiled grimly. "Yes, these are definitely from figurines of Powers That Be pikemen. So we now know what the Fiend was looking for in these houses."

"But why?" Zyssa asked.

Rio looked blank, but then Ariel spoke up. "Something is hidden inside one of the statues in this batch, but the Fiend and his employer don't know which, so they're looking in every single one!"

"How many are there?" Zyssa asked. "He's already hit four houses!"

"There should be a number on the base of the ornament," Rio said. "Let's see if the base of either of these ornaments survived."

He and Ariel once more started searching amongst the broken pieces. Another hour passed. Just when it looked like they were out of luck, Ariel

found what they were looking for - the base of the ornament from the second house had survived almost intact. She quickly turned it over and searched for the information they required.

"This one was the fourth of..." Ariel's face went pale. "Six," she finished.

Rio closed his eyes for a moment or two, while Zyssa gulped.

"That means," she said, "we could end up with a minimum of six murders."

"More," Ariel said. "Remember, the Fiend also killed Captain Sol's manservant... so anyone in any household that has one of these ornaments is at risk."

"We have to work out what he's looking for, how he's tracking these people down, and whom he's working for," Rio said with steely determination. "Before anyone else dies!"

"But Rio, they may have already moved on... I mean, this is the first time he's hit two houses in one town. What are the odds there's a third one of those figurines here in Glameldal?" Zyssa asked.

"He may very well have, Zyssa," Rio agreed. "But something in my gut tells me he's still here, and one thing I've learned in my career is to trust your gut instincts. Also, we've still not explained that other coach, the black one that was following us."

"I assumed he was working with Kest," Zyssa replied.

Rio nodded. "So did I at first, Zyssa, but having replayed the whole incident in my mind... Kest looked far too worried for it to have been part of his plan."

"What exactly did this second coach look like?" Ariel asked thoughtfully.

Zyssa furnished her with a description.

"Do you think you know something about it, Ariel?" Rio asked.

"I just might," Ariel said, then she walked off to have a brief conversation with one of her men. He nodded, and quickly departed. Ariel then came back over to Rio and Zyssa, "Leave the files on the table and gather your things together, Rangers - we're going for a ride."

"Where to, Ariel?" Zyssa asked.

"Your description of this mysterious wagon sounds rather like the ones that a travelling sideshow that is currently set up outside of town uses... and they turned up here not more than a day before this spate of killings started," Ariel explained. "I think it may be worth a look. Don't you two?" she said, as she picked up her cloak and put it round her shoulders.

Rio and Zyssa both nodded, and started collecting their personal effects together.

"And while we're doing this, some of my agents are going to make some subtle enquiries as to whether there are any more of those figurines in Glameldal," Ariel explained, as they walked out of the house and into Ariel's coach.

An hour or so later, the coach was pulling up outside the travelling show. Zyssa saw a poster attached to a tree. She walked over to it and read it.

***Norman Easter's Travelling Carnival. Featuring: Madame Cruithne (Fortune Teller), Heckle-Jeckle (Jester), Olmec the Pigmy & some of the Dungeon Realm's most fearsome critters.***

"Sounds... interesting," she mused to herself, before following Rio and Ariel into the setup of wagons, cages and tents that made up the carnival. As they were looking around, a man came over to them.

"Hello, folks, can I help you?" he said with a smile.

"Yes, could you direct us to whomever is in charge of this carnival?" Ariel said.

"That would be me - Norman Easter at your service, Miss...?" he said, bowing slightly.

"Ariel Martinez, I'm the Powers That Be representative in this area. These are Dungeon Rangers Rio Bolt and Zyssa Silverdale," Ariel said.

"A pleasure and an honour to meet you all," Easter said. "I hope your visit here is not due to any unpleasant matters," he added, rather too quickly for Rio's liking, though his facial expression did not let on.

"As a matter of fact, Mr Easter, we're here to enquire about your wagons, as there has been an accident on the road out of town and the description of one of the vehicles involved sounds rather like one of your wagons. So if you wouldn't mind showing me your wagons, please..."

"Certainly, dear lady - always happy to help out, just follow me," Easter said, gesturing for the three to follow him.

Ariel smiled and turned to Rio and Zyssa. "This won't take long - you two just wait here," she said, giving them a sly wink.

Rio nodded. "As you wish, Agent Martinez."

Ariel nodded and then followed Norman Easter. Once they were out of sight, Rio turned to Zyssa. "Come on, Zyssa, let's have a snoop around."

The two Rangers split up and started wandering around all the wagons and cages, looking for anything out of place, or for signs of the Fiend. As Rio was looking over one of the wagons, something caught his eye. He bent down and

picked something up to look at it. As he did so, he became aware of being watched. He pocketed what he had picked up, stood up and looked around, but he couldn't see anyone.

"Hehehehehehehehehehehehe. Look left, look right, but you never see what's right above you," a voice said from above.

Rio looked up and saw a jester, sitting cross-legged on top of the wagon and grinning at him. His jester outfit was black and white, and one half of his face was also painted white. His eyes were ink black... there was something about them - and his grin - that put the hackles on Rio's neck up.

"Suppose you must be the jester that was advertised on the poster," Rio said.

The jester laughed again; there was something twisted about that laugh. "Hackle-Jeckle at your service. I can make you die laughing."

Rio didn't respond, but simply walked away - he'd seen all he needed to see from this wagon.

Hackle-Jeckle watched him go before adding, "Or just simply... die, Ranger Bolt! Hehehehehehehehehehehe!"

Zyssa, meanwhile, was looking at some of the cages that had Dungeon critters in them. She peered into one that was particularly dark. As she did so, she heard a snuffling sound.

"That's the cavernwight, Miss. Don't get too close or he may have your face off."

Zyssa looked round to see what she took to be the pygmy, Olmec. He had black hair and dull brown eyes, and was dressed in what Zyssa took to be handmade clothes.

"I thought cavernwights were extinct," Zyssa said conversationally.

"There's still a few left," the pygmy replied. "He's our star attraction... him, and Madame Cruithne the fortune teller."

"Where's her trailer?" Zyssa asked.

Olmec pointed her towards it, and then watched her with a cold stare. However, as Zyssa approached the wagon the pygmy had indicated, she spotted something else. A smile appeared on her face and - forgetting about Madame Cruithne - she headed back to where Rio and Ariel were waiting. Ariel was busy saying goodbye to Norman Easter.

"Thank you for your co-operation in this matter, and my apologies for any inconvenience we've caused you," she said politely.

Easter smiled; it was just a tad too wide. "No trouble at all, Miss Martinez - always happy to help."

"Well, we'll leave you in peace now, Mr Easter. Come along, Rangers." Ariel, Rio and Zyssa turned and headed back to where their coach was waiting for them. Easter watched them go.

As he did, a figure emerged from one of the trailers. "It seems, Norman, that those two Rangers are getting too close."

Norman turned and looked at the lady who now stood just behind him. "What do you wish me to do about them, Madame Cruithne?"

Madame Cruithne, the apparent fortune teller, was dressed in a deep blue dress embroidered with blue and black rhinestones, and wore a tiara with a deep blue sapphire in the middle of it. She glanced at Norman. "Nothing, Norman - measures have already been taken. We must prepare for tonight's excursion. I've finally managed to home in on the psychic vibrations of the object."

Norman smiled. "You've finally located it?"

Madame Cruithne nodded. "Yes, dear Norman. Tonight, the Ring of the Balrog shall be in our possession."

The sinister duo watched Ariel's coach pull away. No one in the coach noticed the small figure of Olmec running up behind and jumping onto the back.

Madame Cruithne smiled. "And Rangers Bolt and Silverdale will be in the hereafter."

Meanwhile, in the coach, Rio and Zyssa were sharing what they had found out with Ariel. Zyssa went first. "It was definitely the coach that was tailing us and Mr Kest. It was hidden out of sight from the main cluster of coaches."

"So, Mr Norman Easter was lying about his coaches," Ariel concluded.

"That's not all," Rio said, reaching into his pocket and withdrawing the item he had picked up. It was a broken piece of china - a part of the same military figurine that had been targeted in all the break-ins. "It must have got caught on the Fiend's clothes, and he's trudged it back to his master's little carnival."

Ariel nodded. "I think another visit to Mr Easter is called for - one with backup and an official warrant."

"How long will that take to arrange?" Rio asked.

"The judge is a good friend of mine," Ariel said with a smile. "I should have one in my hand by dawn."

"Good," Rio smiled. "I'm sure you can handle it all from here, Ariel, but I'd like to hang around to see the look on Inquisitor Finley's face when you wrap



this up and show him he's been wasting his superiors' - and local law officials' - time."

Ariel laughed. "You're more than welcome to stay for that," she said.

"By the way, Ariel, what are we going to do if your men have found out that there are more of those figurines in Glameldal?" Zyssa asked.

"My men have been instructed to take the occupants of any house containing one of those figurines into protective custody until this is over."

Rio nodded. "Good idea, Ariel. If you could just drop me and Zyssa back at our inn, we'll get in touch with Calwain and get him to notify the local authorities in the other two towns this group have hit, and then we'll meet you again at dawn to go and put these people under lock and key."

Ariel nodded and passed the instructions on to her driver. Soon enough, the coach pulled up outside The Innsmouth Shadow and Rio and Zyssa disembarked. They waved goodbye to Ariel and then retired to their room. No one noticed the small figure of Olmec jumping from the coach a little further down the road.

Zyssa yawned and stretched. "After a day like this, I'm ready for some rest." She looked at her dress, which was stained with dirt and dust from her fight with Kest. "And I could do with changing my clothes."

"Need a hand?" Rio teased.

Zyssa laughed. "I can manage on my own, thank you, Ranger Bolt. You just keep your hands to yourself."

Rio laughed. "I'll wait outside until you're finished... otherwise I refuse to be held responsible for what the sight of your body might make me do to you."

Rio kissed her and left the room. Zyssa smiled and went over to the door,

intending to lock it, but then she simply leaned against it and began undoing her dress. Once she had it undone - but before she removed it - she went over to the wardrobe to pick out a new one. She opened the wardrobe and found herself face-to-face with a towering figure dressed all in black. He was incredibly broad-shouldered (he only just fitted into the wardrobe) and his face was horribly disfigured. It was the Cossgrove Fiend.

Zyssa made to scream but an oversized hand clamped around her mouth; it almost covered her whole face, muffling the scream. Outside, Rio thought he heard something, but he wasn't sure. The Fiend pushed Zyssa backwards, towards the bed; Zyssa deliberately tripped herself up so she fell backwards onto it and away from his grasp, just long enough to scream before she was once again silenced, this time by a hard and savage backhand across her face. Out cold, Zyssa's head lolled sideways, an ugly red mark across one side of her face and a small trickle of blood running from her lip.

The Fiend reached down towards her prone figure with his oversized hands, just as the door flew open and Rio burst in. He stopped in his tracks for a moment - at the sight not only of the prone figure of Zyssa, but also of the Cossgrove Fiend. The Fiend looked at him, and Rio could swear he saw a flicker of recognition in those pitch black, piggy eyes.

The Fiend snarled and started lumbering towards him. Thinking quickly, Rio darted away from its deadly grasp. He ran over to the fireplace and picked up the iron poker that lay beside it. He turned to see the Fiend once more coming for him. He swung at it with the poker and caught it on the side of the head. It yowled but didn't go down, even though this blow would have felled a normal person.

Rio kept flailing away at the beast with the poker. It backed away, covering its head with its massive arms, trying to ward off the blows. It backed towards the window. Rio seized what might be his only chance - he charged headlong at the monster, throwing all his weight against its massive frame.

Having not seen the attack coming, the Fiend was knocked off its feet.

There was an animalistic yell, followed by the sound of breaking glass and then silence. Rio took a few moments to catch his breath and compose himself, before he ventured towards the broken window to look down at the street below.

When he did so, his heart fell - there was no sign of the Fiend; just a load of broken glass to show where it had landed, and a trail of blood leading off down the street.

"How do you kill that abomination?" Rio said in a disheartened voice. Then he remembered Zyssa, and turned to attend to her.

He felt something hit him in the neck. It felt like an insect bite, but it was in fact a small dart. Rio started to feel very sleepy. He pivoted on his feet and crashed to the ground. As he did so, he just caught sight of the diminutive figure of Olmec standing in the doorway, replacing his blowpipe in his waistband.

Rio's head felt like it weighed a ton. His eyes flickered open slowly and he tried to focus his blurred vision.

"Welcome, Ranger Bolt," a female voice said from somewhere to his right. "So nice to finally meet in person the man responsible for causing me so many setbacks."

Rio turned in the direction of the voice and saw a lady, flanked by Norman Easter and Heckle-Jeckle. She smiled at him, but it was not a warm or pleasant smile, resembling that which a crocodile gives you just before it bites your head off.

"Allow me to introduce myself," she said conversationally. "I am Madame Francesca Alessandra Cruithne, and I already know who you are, Ranger. You are called Rio Bolt."

Rio didn't respond.

Madame Cruithne smiled again. "It was you who intervened in the attempted infiltration of the Hall of Folly, and cost me five very good agents."

Rio's eyes narrowed and his mind swung into action. "So, there was a mastermind behind that little gambit," he said in a matter-of-fact voice.

Madame Cruithne laughed slightly. "Just one of my many gambits, Ranger Bolt... I'm playing a far greater game in this realm than you or the narrow-sighted Dungeon Master you pledge allegiance to realise. In fact, in the grand scheme of things, you have proved a relatively minor - if persistent - inconvenience to me, except..." Madame Cruithne's eyes narrowed. "Except in the matter of the Ring of the Balrog."

Rio's eyes widened and he looked up at her. "That's what this is all about?"

Madame Cruithne nodded. "You chased my emissary into a storeroom and apprehended him after he had acquired the ring, but before he could deliver it..."

"But we never found the ring," Rio stated.

"No, you did not, because before you arrested him... my emissary had time to conceal the ring in the base of one of a set of china figurines. My associates and I have been searching for it ever since. Four long years it's taken to track down every one of those figurines, but tonight... I finally managed to lock onto its psychic vibrations, and soon I shall have it in my hands... and all the powers contained within!"

Rio struggled to get up but found he was bound tightly. He had to stop this sinister madwoman. The Ring of the Balrog was a source of immense power that in the wrong hands - which hers certainly were - could be devastating. Just then, another thought entered Rio's mind.

"Where's Zyssa?" he asked harshly.

Madame Cruithne smiled. "Is that the name of your little companion?" she cooed. "Well, don't worry about her - my associates and I have arranged suitable entertainment for you both. Show him, Heckle-Jeckle."

The demented jester stepped forward, chuckling insanely all the while. "Well, according to Olmec, when she was here this morning she showed a great interest in our cavernwight... so I thought I'd arrange a meeting for her."

He held up a magic mirror to Rio's face. An image shimmered into existence - Zyssa was shackled to a wall, seemingly still unconscious. What worried and angered Rio more, though, was the state of her dress - it looked like it had been ripped. He glared at Heckle-Jeckle and Norman Easter.

"If either or both of you encroached upon her honour..." he said in a low, dangerous tone.

Heckle-Jeckle laughed. "Her? I've seen prettier things in a goblin pen."

Just then Rio saw that Zyssa was beginning to stir. She looked groggily around her.

Heckle-Jeckle laughed. "She's down an old well just outside this camp, and any moment now..."

Zyssa's head shot up and she peered into the blackness.

In the well, Zyssa could hear the snuffling and shuffling noises from earlier in the day. She recognised them. She didn't know where she was, but she knew she was in a lot of danger if a cavernwight was nearby. She frantically pulled at her bonds to try and escape, but she was held fast.

Back in the coach, Madame Cruithne got up from her chair and signalled for Norman to follow her. "Well, Ranger Bolt, this is where we part. It's been so

nice to meet you face-to-face, but now I must leave you as I have matters to attend to and a boat to catch. So I'll wish you and your little friend Zyssa a short but very good night." She then looked at Heckle-Jeckle. "Once you've dealt with him, meet us at the boat."

Heckle-Jeckle nodded his head. Madame Cruithne and Norman left the coach. Heckle-Jeckle turned to Rio with a sadistic grin on his face. However, Rio was more concerned with what he could still see in the magic mirror.

Zyssa continued to struggle against the ropes that bound her wrists to the wall, fighting back the urge not to scream as the cavernwight shuffled closer to her. Tears of fear ran down her dirt-stained face, leaving visible trails as they washed the dirt away. The colour had drained completely from her face... she already looked like a corpse.

"See, Ranger, your little friend will soon be devoured by my pet." The demented jester held up the magic mirror. "Enjoy the show, Ranger... it's the last one you'll ever see."

Heckle-Jeckle placed the magic mirror in a position where Rio couldn't help but look into it, and then laughed sadistically as he left the cart. Rio thrashed about, trying to undo the chains that held him in place. All the while the frightful image of the cavernwight closing in on Zyssa played out before his eyes. In little more than a few minutes, the sightless brute would be on her and its frightful teeth would sink into her silky soft flesh... he had to get out of this mess... he just had to!

The cavernwight crept closer and closer to Zyssa. Its snout nuzzled into her left thigh and then... Zyssa yelped as its sharp teeth bit into her.

"ZYSSA!" Rio cried in alarm, thrashing about and sending the magic mirror smashing to the ground.

## REMEMBER HIM?

Series 5/6/7/8. Level 1/2/3.

### SYLVESTER HANDS

Despite the fact that I would have liked to see Paul Valentine's screen time split a lot more evenly between Sylvester Hands and the seldom seen Motley during series 5 and 6, I have always been a fan of his portrayal of Sly, a character who provides or facilitates a good chunk of Knightmare's genuinely amusing moments. It is hard to imagine a dirtier, scruffier vagabond than the one Paul presented to us, always with a mad glint in his eye and a disgustingly slurping manner of speaking. Sly's interaction with dungeoneers was always brilliant, and his habit of laying his filthy hands all over them (even stroking or sniffing parts of them at times) was both repulsive and wonderful. And of course Sly was always good for a hearty laugh, because he was always so incredibly stupid... er, wasn't he?

Well, no, not really. When the character was first introduced at the beginning of series 5, he had not yet evolved into the brainless twit who soon became so familiar to Knightmare fans. Although he was as dirty and disgusting as ever, the original Hands was rather devious and sharp, and he had a genuinely threatening air about him. After his very subdued first appearance with Brother Mace and Catherine, and his fairly brief yet undoubtedly painful appearance with Pixel and Richard, Sly made probably his most interesting appearance ever, with Sarah at the Greenshades inn. It was the first time we really saw what he was like as a character, and it became very clear that he was someone to be very cautious of.

The scene involves Sarah negotiating the fairly simple exchange of a bar of gold for a key, but with this particular performance as Sly, Paul Valentine really makes the encounter into something special. His negotiation technique is cunning and shrewd, and his manner towards Sarah is distinctly lecherous, though entertainingly rather than disturbingly so. He calls her *my dahlin'*, he sniffs her hair, he leers at her alarmingly throughout the exchange, creating the impression that he might sweep in to attack her (possibly rather

inappropriately) at any second. This is a scene I've appreciated more as I've grown older, as it really is a brilliant performance from Paul Valentine. But perhaps as this interpretation of Hands is probably less accessible to younger viewers (i.e. a good proportion of the CITV audience) the decision to devolve Hands into a clueless oaf was understandable.

Sly's very next appearance, with Ben and Gwendoline in level two, saw him established as the brainless character we know so well. After trying out a few different things, Paul had finally settled on the voice - he now sounded stupid rather than cunning, and the introduction of the famous *Hands, like feet...* catchphrase served to underline this impression starkly. And this is how the character stayed throughout the rest of Knightmare's run, which is a shame in a way, although I never minded at the time because Hands was always a consistently amusing character, and I suppose that's what really counts!

Of course Hands did prove himself to be a genuine threat on occasion, especially when he claimed himself a victim by dragging January off to Mount Fear in series 6, and he had his goblin horn and rope ready to do the same thing to Julie in series 7 if she had not managed to get him drunk. (The scene between Sly and Julie is always a joy to watch, and contains some of the best actor/dungeoneer interplay you'll see anywhere in Knightmare.) Like many of the long established characters, Hands did not receive as much screen time as he deserved in series 8 (the one series where Motley actually appeared more than him!) although the scene involving Hands, Daniel and the Fearsome Potion is one of the highlights (and there aren't that many!) of this series for me.



## KNIGHTMARE LOCATIONS

Castle Rising, King's Lynn, Norfolk

**Location:** Castle Rising Village, near King's Lynn, Norfolk.

**AKA:** Various level two locations.

**Series featured in:** 4/5.

These pictures were taken by me, Jake Collins, in September 2009.

This door was reached at the very end of the series 4 eye shield sequence featuring the stairs in level two - look for the telltale semicircular hole beside the padlock:



If you have the stomach to walk up quite a lot of spiral stairs, you'll come across the room that was usually featured early on level two in series 4, and was twice used in series 5, once to house Aesandre's blue fire:



At the end of an early series 4 episode, the credits ran over an eye shield sequence walking up the main stairs, but this was never used as part of the main programme:



**Next Issue:** Corfe Castle, Dorset.

## TOP 35 KIDS' TV VILLAINS (Part Three)

By Ricky Temple

### **25. Magica De Spell (Duck Tales):**

Magica De Spell was (alongside the Beagle Boys and Flintheart Glomberg) one of Duck Tales' trio of most prominent villains; she was the most powerful and therefore also the most dangerous.

Magica is a powerful sorceress who has desires of world domination. However, as powerful as she is, she still requires more power in order to achieve this goal, so she has set her sights on stealing Scrooge McDuck's Number One Dime, the first dime he ever made, as it contains all the psychic vibes from Scrooge's business deals and good fortune.

Magica was often accompanied by her brother Poe De Spell, whom she had once (in a fit of temper) changed into a raven (a reference to Edgar Allan Poe). She would also frequently hire the Beagle Boys to aid her in her schemes.

### **24. Creep-Pea & Black-Eyed Pea (The Poddington Peas):**

This duo of creepy, spiteful and mean-spirited peas was the main source of trouble in the small village of Poddington. They were both a darker shade of green than any of the other peas in Poddington; they both lived in Castle Creep. Creep-Pea was small with a long pointed nose and two fang-like teeth; Black-Eyed Pea was bigger and had an eye-patch over his left eye.

They were frequently making mischief in Poddington and attempting to make life difficult and miserable for the other peas, such as kidnapping Happ-Pea and Sweet-Pea to be their slaves and cook their food for them, as they themselves were too lazy to do so. Inevitably these schemes backfired, and Creep-Pea and Black-Eyed Pea often found themselves being chased by PC Pod, Poddington's resident policeman.

### **23. The Voice (Trapped!):**

The first "modern-day" villain on my list, The Voice is the main antagonist in

the CBBC kids' gameshow Trapped! The only goal of this unidentified female (we only ever see the lower part of her face and her lips, which are always painted in purple lipstick) is to trap as many children as she can in her six-floor tower.

On each of the six floors there is some kind of twisted game that a team of children must play. The Voice always tips the odds against the team by turning one of their number against the others (the "saboteur") to prevent them succeeding. At the end of the game, if the team succeeds then the saboteur is automatically trapped on that floor. If the team fails then they vote for who they think was the saboteur, and whoever has the most votes is then trapped. Over the course of the games, the team is whittled down until only one is left, and they are allowed to escape the tower.

The Voice's sole motivation - unlike a lot of the villains on this list - is just the pure, sadistic enjoyment of trapping her victims and turning one of the team's number against the others. She has two assistants in her schemes - the Caretaker of the tower, and a teenage rogue called Wiley Sneak. However, this is yet more evidence of The Voice's sadistic delight in making people do evil deeds that they wouldn't normally do, as both the Caretaker and Wiley Sneak were once trapped by her, and she has promised them both their freedom only after they have helped her trap an unspecified number of children. The Voice is - at her very essence - a being of pure malevolence and sadistic evil, and this is never clearer than when she gleefully informs the child who's been trapped, *"Poor, unfortunate (NAME)... YOU'RE TRAPPED!"*

## **22. Captain Conrad Black (Captain Scarlet and the Mysterons):**

This former SPECTRUM agent is the Mysterons' main agent in their war of nerves and attrition against the Earth, in both the original puppet show and the later CGI remake. Black was the leader of the expedition to Mars that resulted in the war starting, when an attempt at communication by the Mysterons was mistaken for an act of aggression and Black ordered defensive measures. The Mysteron base was destroyed, only to reform in front of the eyes of Black and his crew, and the Voice of the Mysterons

proclaimed war on Earth. At this moment Captain Black fell under the control of the Mysterons. In the original series it is through mind control, but in the new series he is killed and Mysteron-ised, like all other Mysteron agents.

In this state he plays a key role in the Mysterons' acts of revenge on Earth, committing sabotage, espionage, theft and even murder to further his Mysteron masters' plans. Captain Black was never apprehended in either version of the show; the cancellation of the original meant the story was never resolved, and in the modern one his ultimate fate is left ambiguous as he is known to have been in the Mysteron complex when it is destroyed, but he does later appear to be watching Captain Scarlet's rocket departing for Earth before he fades away into nothing.

#### **21. David Xanatos (Gargoyles):**

Voiced by Star Trek: The Next Generation's Jonathan Frakes, this industrialist, philanthropist, Illuminati member, leader of the criminal organisation The Steel Clan and close associate of the criminal mercenary gang The Pack (led by his lover [and later wife] Fox) harbours ambitions of world domination. He was one of the main antagonists of Disney's animated action TV series *Gargoyles*.

Xanatos was the one responsible for the Gargoyles being awoken from their curse-induced sleep in the first place. He originally used them to further his own goals, until they found out his true motives and intentions and turned on him. Xanatos later built his own robotic Gargoyles (The Steel Clan) to combat Goliath and his fellow Gargoyles, sent Fox and her fellow Pack members after them, and even went as far as forming an uneasy alliance with the renegade Gargoyle Demona, all in order to attain his goals.

Xanatos's trademark was his elaborate and complex plots and schemes, which - even in failure - usually ended up benefiting him in some manner, although he did at times partake in clichéd acts of villainy such as arranging a death trap for the Gargoyles. In that case, when the Gargoyles had fallen into his trap, he asked, *"So, how am I doing for my first attempt at being a*

*clichéd villain?”*

Xanatos, as ruthless as he was in pursuing his goals and his feud with the Gargoyles, did have feelings for his wife Fox, and later their son Alex. He would go out of his way to protect them, and later it even emerged that his desire for world domination was born out of a desire to bring about world peace. Ultimately, Xanatos did end his feud with the Gargoyles and even became a semi-ally (the two sides never fully trusted each other, though) against Demona in the final episodes.

## KIDS' TV SHOWS I GREW UP WITH

**Focus on:** The Dream Stone.

**Original Broadcast Run:** September 1990 - March 1995.

**UK TV Channel:** ITV1.

This was a fun cartoon that aired for four series on CITV, and I think the best word to describe it is fantastical - it was very much fantasy based, and it was made (animated, voiced and scored) in a very attractive, stimulating way that really got my imagination going. The planet Viltheed was divided into two hemispheres - the Light Side and the Dark Side - which were separated by the Mist of Limbo, a giant purple stormcloud that encircled the planet. The Light Side was known as the Land of Dreams, while the Dark Side was the Land of Nightmares.

In his castle in the Land of Dreams, the Dream Maker (a white-bearded, Merlin-type wizard) mixed pleasant dreams (rather like Roald Dahl's BFG) and transmitted them to the inhabitants of the Land of Dreams via the most precious and powerful object in the land, the Dream Stone, which he kept in a high tower. The aforementioned inhabitants were green, furry creatures called Noops, and two of them - Rufus (a notorious daydreamer) and Amberley (who I always thought looked like a clone of Mellisandre) - assisted the Dream Maker in his work. The other "staff member" in the Dream Maker's castle was Albert, a strange, floating (and rather annoying, in my opinion) half-dog/half-fish creature, which the Dream Maker had apparently dreamed about one night and then brought to life, because he liked the look of it!

The Land of Dreams was guarded by creatures called Wutts, who were also green and looked very much like Noops, except they were a lot taller. They had an interesting mode of transportation - giant floating leaves. The leader of the Wutts was Pildit, but his role in the show was quickly usurped by his grandmother Wildit, who was obviously thought to be a much more interesting character. The other main Wutt character was Mr Blossom, the Dream Maker's gardener, who was very old, deaf and irritable.

Meanwhile, in the Land of Nightmares, Zordrak - a giant blue dragon-like creature, and the self-professed Lord of Nightmares - did everything he could to stop the Dream Maker from sending out his pleasant dreams, usually by attempting to steal the Dream Stone. Zordrak was a renegade Dream Maker who had abused his magic and his position on the Council of Dream Makers, and he has always been by far my favourite character from this show. He had at his command an army of purple wraiths called Argorables, which would attempt to invade sleepers' minds and fill them with horrible nightmares, but the Argorables melted away to nothing when faced with the power of the Dream Stone, or indeed with sunlight, just like real dreams in the cold light of day.

As the memorable opening narration always told us, Zordrak was not alone in the Land of Nightmares. He was served and protected by an inept race called the Urpneys, which he had presumably enslaved and militarised. Urpneys were basically human in appearance, except they had spiked stegosaurus tails and long, blotchy noses. The most senior Urpney - and Zordrak's main henchman - was Urpgor, an extremely mad scientist who kept inventing things designed to steal the Dream Stone (or inconvenience the Dream Maker and his allies in some other way) which always went wrong, of course!

Curiously, Urpgor was green, yet all the other Urpneys were pink! Sergeant Blob was their commanding officer, while the two main featured Urpneys were Frizz and Nug, who were both rather dim and apt to complain a lot. A typical episode would usually feature Blob, Frizz and Nug taking one of Urpgor's inventions to the Land of Dreams with the intention of getting hold of the Dream Stone, and being foiled by the Dream Maker and his allies before the end of the episode... or, if it was a two-parter, before the end of the next episode!

This seems an appropriate moment to mention plot and character development - there wasn't any! Or at least, there was very little, and the scenario I described in the previous paragraph was pretty much the basis



for every episode throughout the four series! This did not make the show any less appealing, but I did find it more than a little repetitive at times. Having said that, there were a few interesting developments and new characters as the show went on. In one episode, we were introduced to a race called the Wuttles (very small versions of Wutts) whose job it was to tend the dream bottle trees, which grew the magic bottles in which the Dream Maker mixed his dreams. Zordrak's sister Zarag was a character that turned up a couple of times, and she had something of a sordid history with the Dream Maker! Urpgor's precocious niece - Little Urppip - was another recurring character whose appearance would always throw a spanner in the works, particularly as Zordrak found her very annoying.

By far the most interesting new element that was introduced, of course, was the Nightmare Stone, which was a purple gem with five prongs and an evil face carved at its centre. Zordrak intended to use the Nightmare Stone to eliminate the effects of the Dream Stone, and although he tried several times to procure and make use of the evil little stone, he never managed to hold onto it for any length of time. The idea of the Nightmare Stone always appealed to me, though - as there was a Dream Stone, there should also be a Nightmare Stone, and Zordrak - the Lord of Nightmares - should make use of it!

The relationship between Rufus and Amberley is something a fan of The Dream Stone might like to analyse and discuss at length, although I don't know if such an avid fan of the show actually exists. Having recently seen the first six episodes on DVD, I must admit to deriving some interest from this subject myself. Rufus and Amberley always describe themselves as "best friends" and they clearly are best friends, but I think there's more than a little of the old "opposites attract" element to their relationship. While both Noops are clearly loyal, noble and brave, Rufus is prone to be a bit silly, careless and clueless, while Amberley is careful, meticulous and canny... as well as being a bit hot-headed!

So, the burning question - are Rufus and Amberley in love? I'm tempted to answer - yes, they are! During the first episode (which is a two-parter)

Amberley gets herself turned to stone by Zordrak, and Rufus manages to restore her to life by crying on her - an act of love if ever I saw one! In a subsequent episode, which is rather a good one, Zordrak sends his essence to the Land of Dreams and possesses Amberley while she is asleep, which is an unusually dark plot basis for an episode. When Rufus carries the exhausted Amberley to the Dream Maker's napping chair and lays her onto it, he brushes her hair away from her face and looks at her very lovingly, which I think clearly shows us what Rufus's feelings are, even if Amberley isn't aware of them. Clueless as he is, it takes Rufus a long time to realise that his best friend/true love is possessed by Zordrak, and I thought it would have been nice at that point to see Zordrak driven out with a kiss from Rufus - love overcoming evil, in very much the same vein as the stone and tears scene - but no, a golden opportunity was missed there! And I don't think Rufus and Amberley's relationship was really explored any further in subsequent episodes (as I said, this show was light on plot and character development) which it could have been, and that wouldn't have been a bad thing!

Having said all that, the one aspect of the show that always makes it worth watching for me is Zordrak! He is such a cool cartoon villain! He's a huge dragon, he shoots lightning from his fingers, he has a wonderfully deep and resonating voice - what's not to love? Zordrak's voice was provided by Gary Martin, whom fans of Red Dwarf may know as the voice of the Epideme virus, while anyone who watched CITV's Richard O'Brien vehicle The Ink Thief might have enjoyed (as I did) Gary's performance as Lorny Snoop.

I'll never forget Zordrak's wrathful cries of "Urpgor!" and the even more venom-filled "BLOB!". Indeed, Zordrak was not an easy master to please, and he had no qualms about turning disobedient and/or inept Urpneys to stone, and feeding them to his gruesome pets. Sadly, Zordrak did seem to mellow out a little as the series progressed, partly because he was featured much less - scenes in the Land of Nightmares would frequently revolve around Urpgor, Blob, Frizz and Nug, and not feature Zordrak at all, which was a real shame! I like Zordrak a lot, and that's really why I still like The Dream Stone... although, with or without Zordrak, it's a rather nice cartoon!

## PUZZLE PAGE TWO

Here are some questions I made up to use in place of Nightmare riddles whilst playing the board game with my best friend Ross "Raven's Eye" Thompson. They are designed to be accessible to a keen yet not encyclopaedic Nightmare fan, so if you don't get at least half of them right, you should not be reading this fanzine!

### PUZZLES:

- > During series 5 and 6, how many victims were claimed by causeways?
- > Complete the sequence for Play Your Cards Right: Ace of Hearts, Two of Hearts, Queen of Hearts, Eight of Hearts...
- > Which ONE of the following three puzzles DID NOT defeat the first team to attempt it? CORRIDOR OF BLADES, BLOCK AND TACKLE, PLAY YOUR CARDS RIGHT.
- > Complete the list of Corridor of Blades victims: ALISTAIR, SARAH, DUNCAN...
- > Name 3 of the 4 causeway combinations from series 5.
- > How many possible "exit squares" (i.e. one knight's move away from the door) are there in Combat Chess?

### CREATURES:

- > Which creatures make their first appearance in the first episode of series 3, and their last appearance in the eighth episode of series 8?
- > In which series and level does a skull ghost haunting first appear?
- > To which creatures does Pickle attribute howling in Winteria?
- > Which large creature can be seen exclusively in the following episodes? S3E15, S5E16, S6E13, S8E1.
- > Which ONE of these characters did not appear onscreen with Grippa and Rhark? SKARKILL, LORD FEAR, RAPTOR, SYLVESTER HANDS.
- > Which ONE of these creatures never killed a dungeoneer? BLOCKER, GOBLIN, SKELETRON, MIREMAN.

# THE FORBIDDEN FEAR

## Chapter 5: Trial by Fire

By Chris Lunn

Pickle emerged from the barrier and looked about in amazement. A great moat of fire surrounded him. A castle sat in the middle, made of some kind of black stone and with guards walking up and down the battlements. Looking more closely, Pickle could make out flames dancing where their eyes should have been.

"Enchanted guards," he breathed.

In front of him lay a walkway of stone, leading up to the castle gate. Two more guards stood in front of the door. A voice suddenly boomed in his mind.

"The Shield of Truth will allow the bearer to blind all others to the truth."

"Let's see if it works," he said.

He slipped the Shield from the knapsack and slid it over his arm. He walked briskly over the walkway.

"STOP!" said the first of the guards.

"STATE YOUR BUSINESS!" said the other.

"I am a servant of Lord Fear, come to check on Treguard the Fool."

"YOU MAY ENTER, SERVANT OF THE FEARFUL ONE," the guards said in unison.

Both stood aside and the doors ground slowly open. Pickle strode through, eager to keep up the subterfuge. The doors crashed shut and he was left in darkness.

Pickle removed the Shield from his arm and placed it back in the knapsack. He took one step forward and suddenly the room was illuminated by dozens of torches. Pickle gazed in awe at the sheer magnificence of the room. It was of an immense size and every wall had many doors. The doors were of a grand scale; gold, silver, bronze and many more, even some metals Pickle had never seen before. Regaining his senses, he realised he could be lost in here forever.

"Which door are you behind, Master?" he cried.

Again a voice sounded inside his head.

"The Sword of Freedom will show you the way to those unjustly

imprisoned."

Pickle opened the knapsack and retrieved the Sword. As he swung it about, the point glowed a brilliant orange. As he lowered it, the glow faded away. He slowly moved it around the room until the glow was at its brightest. The Sword was pointed at the shabbiest door in the room. He put the Sword away and walked towards it. Examining the door, he noticed that it was almost rusted away. He pushed it and it crumbled away in front of him. He could now see the winding staircase and the darkness below.

Pickle finally arrived, out of breath, at the bottom of the staircase. A series of open stone dungeons disappeared into the gloom. Looking into the first, he saw only the remains of its occupant.

"Nobody has escaped from here before."

He carried on looking in each and only finding the remains of long-forgotten creatures. He reached the last dungeon and peered inside. There, chained to the wall and magically bound, was Treguard himself. Approaching the Dungeon Master, Pickle saw the evidence of rough treatment. He realised he was unconscious, perhaps even nearing death.

"That's right, Pickle, hurry up or Lord Fear will have won the game once and for all!" said the voice again.

"But what do I do?" he said.

"Give me the Cup that Heals and let it do its work."

"Yes, Master," Pickle said formally.

He removed it from the knapsack and forced it into Treguard's hand. The room began to shake and the bindings (magical and physical) began to break. Treguard's eyes opened and he looked around. Spying Pickle, he smiled delightedly.

"I knew you could do it, Pickle!"

The last of the bindings finally fell. Treguard moved forward and shook Pickle's hand.

"Thank you, my friend... but now the real work must begin!"

## FIFTY-TWO YEARS OF ALVIN

By Rosey Collins

One day in 1958, a perfectly ordinary chipmunk living in Yosemite, USA, ran out into the road and almost got itself killed by a car. But did he bolt for the woods, having learned his lesson? No, he did not. He stood up on his hind legs and looked that car right in the eye. That little chipmunk has undoubtedly been dead for many years now. Perhaps he died of old age, perhaps a larger animal ate him or perhaps, in the end, he challenged one car too many. But the spirit of that chipmunk lives on. Little did he know that the driver of the car was singer/songwriter Ross Bagdasarian, who had recently discovered the amusing effects of playing a recording of a human voice at double speed and he had been trying to think of an animal best suited to singing his fun new Christmas song. So that little chipmunk became Alvin, who - much like the Nightmare Dungeon - has appeared to us in many forms and just keeps on giving.

In the newly named "The Chipmunk Song", Bagdasarian's alter-ego Dave Seville has to yell at Alvin a few times in order to get him to sing, whilst his other two chipmunks - Simon and Theodore - behave impeccably until the end, when the three of them pester Dave to let them "sing it again" and the whole session descends into chaos. The song was released with a record sleeve depicting three rather vicious looking chipmunks with huge teeth, wearing jumpsuits with their initials on them - "A", "S" and, of course, "T". The Chipmunks made their first public appearance on *The Ed Sullivan Show* shortly after the release of their song, looking like cute cartoony chipmunk soft toys. In the one clip of the show that I have seen, Alvin generates plenty of audience laughter by threatening to hit Ed Sullivan over the head with a little wooden mallet, restraining himself only when Ross/Dave leans over and screams "ALVIN!" right in his face. Shortly after this, Simon and Theodore appear so that the four of them can mime to the recording of their song (which looks a bit rubbish!).

Over the next few years, Dave Seville and the Chipmunks continued to release records which showcased Alvin's flamboyant personality. In "Alvin

for President", for example, Alvin is running for president (or at least playing at it), and keeps changing the lyrics of Dave's new song to include lines like, "Just as long as ALVIN'S PRES-ID-ENT". In "Alvin's Orchestra", he has hired a very expensive orchestra and merrily sings lines like, "Who cares what the orchestra costs?", while Dave occasionally yells things like, "I'll tell you who - ...". The songs were different, but the premise was always the same: Alvin annoys the hell out of Dave, with Simon and Theodore acting as willing accomplices, neither of whom ever seem to feel any of Dave's wrath. Alvin is happy to take all the blame, or rather, he doesn't care what Dave thinks. He just wants to enjoy himself.

In 1961, the Chipmunks were drastically redesigned. While their record sleeves had them looking like stripy, possibly rabid rats in search of an unsuspecting hand to bite, it was considered that they should look a little cuddlier for *The Alvin Show*, their first animated series. So they were made to look like anthropomorphic rodents, though not particularly chipmunk-like, and dressed in their trademark colours: blue for Simon, green for Theodore and red for Alvin, complete with a yellow capital A on his garment and a baseball cap, as if to make it clear that he was the special one. The series began in October 1961 and ran only until September 1962, but it was repeated for many years afterwards in the United States, and everyone loved it (yes, *everyone*). An episode would consist of a few plot-based and/or musical segments, lasting from under two minutes to a maximum of about seven.

Animated sequences were put to hits such as "The Chipmunk Song", "Alvin's Orchestra" and "Alvin for President", allowing the audience to watch the Chipmunks' antics as well as hear them. They also sang familiar songs such as "Clementine", "On Top of Old Smokey" and "Three Blind Mice", to name but a few, to the accompaniment of some great visual comedy. Often, Alvin would do something to "spoil" a performance, which would actually make it a whole lot funnier. When the Chipmunks are about to perform "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" on stage, for example, Dave finds Alvin in the audience eating popcorn ("I wanna watch the show!"). He also liked to change the lyrics of some songs, which Dave could not stand, and a personal favourite of

mine is his sudden decision to sing "The Alvin Twist" on stage after Dave has told him, "We don't sing that kind of music." What a square, man! Alvin has always liked to sing, but he did not like the rigidity of scheduled performance, or the repetitive rehearsals in Dave's studio. So he would do it his own way, with hilarious results, and it is surely this tenacity that makes Alvin so appealing, especially to children.

Ross Bagdasarian died unexpectedly in 1972, and it looked as though the Chipmunks would never rear their furry little heads again. But after overcoming various obstacles and talking to various people, Ross Bagdasarian Jr made a Christmas special starring the Chipmunks in 1981. In this Alvin, Simon and Theodore looked a little gangly and strange, and for some reason had freckled faces, and Alvin's personality seemed to have shrunk drastically. The episode showed him surreptitiously giving away his harmonica to a sick little boy, and getting into trouble with Dave when asking for money to buy himself a replacement. This showed Alvin's enormous heart, which would be further developed later on, but called into question his communication skills and left him seeming a little subdued after his antics in *The Alvin Show*. But it is a fun little thing to watch, and from it came the wonderful *Alvin and the Chipmunks* which ran from 1983 to 1990. The final series aired under a different name, *Chipmunks Go to the Movies*, but the style and feel of the show was exactly the same - the only difference was that every episode was a movie parody (of which there had been a few in *Alvin and the Chipmunks*).

It is *Alvin and the Chipmunks* that I watched growing up. The characters were redesigned again to look more human, but still essentially rodentine, although the designs became gradually more human looking over the years. Simon and Theodore were both fleshed out as characters much more than they had been in *The Alvin Show*. Where Theodore used to giggle a lot, he now became the cute but insecure baby of the group, while Simon became a more multi-faceted version of the archetypal intellectual he had always been. I loved them all, but Alvin was always my firm favourite. Now, as I watch segments from *The Alvin Show*, I see that he lost a little of his flamboyance. In the 1980s TV series, Alvin is a reckless child who goes



considerably further than you or I would, for example by stowing away on ships or causing explosions. Unlike the old Alvin, he is anxious to avoid trouble and keep on Dave's good side. He *would* hire an expensive fifty-piece orchestra, but only if he thought he could do it without Dave finding out. He has never "ruined" a song; the Chipmunks went from doing original songs and well loved nursery rhymes to pop and rock covers, with Alvin hungry for fame and fortune.

He may have become less devil-may-care, but we may fall in love with other aspects of Alvin's newer personality. His love for his brothers, for example, is fierce; the camaraderie between the three of them comes to the fore in many episodes, and is heart-warming indeed. The Chipmunks' back-story is developed, as we learn how they ended up with Dave and see them reunited with their mother Vinny, which adds some touching moments. This series also saw the introduction of the Chipettes, created by Bagdasarian's wife Janice Karman; they are a chipmunk girl group consisting of Brittany, Jeanette and Eleanor. Alvin's relationship with his counterpart Brittany is interesting to watch. Though the Chipettes have their own distinct personalities, Alvin and Brittany are the pair that are most alike, and their tenacity - coupled with their resistance to openness and sentimentality - means that they often disagree on principle and sparks fly. But they love each other really, as we see from time to time.

In 1987, we saw the Chipmunks and the Chipettes in the theatrically released *The Chipmunk Adventure*, behaving very much as they did on the small screen. Of course, it is thanks to Alvin (and to a lesser extent Brittany) that the two parties end up having to race each other around the world in hot air balloons. In 1999's *Alvin and the Chipmunks Meet Frankenstein*, Alvin shows us what an iconic figure he has become by saying the simple line, "I know a short cut!" when he and his brothers are wandering around a theme park. We know him well enough to know what that means! He is wonderful throughout, but there are no milestones or really significant moments for him in this, nor in the 2000 feature length movie, *Alvin and the Chipmunks Meet the Wolfman*. The former is enjoyable up to a point (the second half is ridiculous, but never mind that now), and the latter is great

for Theodore's character, while Alvin just goes on being Alvin (he does blow up the school auditorium at one point, which is what I like to see from him).

Something very strange happened in 2004. Bagdasarian and Karman were possessed by the Devil, and made a film called *Little Alvin and the Minis-Munks*, which used hideous and disturbing puppet versions of the Chipmunks and Chipettes as toddlers. In this film, they spend the week staying with a bird puppet, a frog puppet and Janice Karman playing a character called Lalu, who teaches them right from wrong by patronising them every time they do something they shouldn't such as eating lipstick, fighting over a toy or putting household items down the toilet ("Theodore, I see a lot of things that don't belong in the toilet"). This did nothing for any of the characters, least of all Alvin, who became just one of the crowd. He had nothing in particular to say for himself, and nothing to do except "learn from his mistakes", which is a huge characterisation issue in itself. Alvin *never* learns from his mistakes.

Fortunately, Karman and Bagdasarian freed themselves of whatever was possessing them and did a brilliant job of producing the 2007 movie, *Alvin and the Chipmunks*. I need hardly specify that the Chipmunks were brought to the big screen using CGI, and pretty good CGI it is too. They interact seamlessly with the human actors, and the designs are visually very nice indeed. Rather than looking like human-rodent hybrids, the Chipmunks are actually chipmunks once again, if a little bigger than a regular chipmunk. Their personalities are all essentially still there. Alvin, voiced in this incarnation by Justin Long (played at double speed, of course), is a joy to watch, although once again he has lost a little of his spark. Just a little, mind you, as plot necessitates that all the chipmunks be a little bit wild and wacky - even Simon, who has taken a little of Alvin's recklessness from him, and can no longer act as straight man to his antics. Still, Alvin is the most outspoken of the group, the most energetic, the most likely to scream "AAAAAH!" and jump on Dave's face when he first discovers the mischievous trio in his kitchen.

In 2009, the world was made a better place once again when *Alvin and the*

*Chipmunks: The Squeakquel* graced the big screen. I managed to wait for the DVD, preparing for the possibility that it would be disappointing, but I need not have worried. The chipmunk characters are animated with more up-to-date CGI, allowing them a greater range of movement, but sadly a little less solidarity among the "real" people. But never mind! In this film, Alvin and his brothers behave very much as they did in the 1980s TV series. Simon has settled into life with humans and become rather more uptight, while Alvin has got onto the school football team in spite of his size, and is being led astray by a stereotypically nasty bunch of jocks. There are too many lovely moments in this movie to list, a great many of them involving Alvin, who must overcome his love of attention and popularity in order that his love for his brothers, as well as their music, can prevail. We also see him coming face-to-face with the latest incarnation of Brittany, but sadly they do not have time to develop their love/hate relationship. Brittany's too nice, and Alvin's too busy with other things. But again, never mind. A third movie is in the pipeline, and as he has proven to us time and time again, Alvin has got plenty more to give.

## POETRY CORNER

The first team of series 7 put in a pretty impressive performance, but at least one of Simon's advisors suffered from a severe case of overconfidence, and it seemed like they didn't always really know what they were doing... especially when it came to Play Your Cards Right!

Bold Simon and his Cornwall boys  
Began their quest to quite a noise  
From dragon wardress in a huff,  
To get to level two was tough.  
A potion bought a glass to spy,  
And Fear revealed the reason why  
Old Smirky had to watch his back,  
For fear of Brollachan attack.  
With Fidjit's help the door swung wide,  
Romahna was then satisfied  
That Simon'd earned the right to soar  
To level two, via valley's floor.  
Grimaldine offered up a deal,  
And Sidriss gave a cheerless squeal  
Cos she was only inches high,  
And then they had another spy!  
The info made Grimaldine pleased,  
So past the burning balls they eased.  
Hordriss from reptile skin emerged,  
And Sidriss of her smallness purged.  
And then to level three, via lift,  
Which made Lord Fear a little miffed.  
With gem in hand the boat would sail,  
Grimaldine at the oars did flail.  
The Cards of Chaos proved too much,  
They didn't know which ones to touch.  
And so, upon the ledge up high,  
The team was soon to fail and die.  
For though they made an okay start,  
They simply didn't have the heart!

## PUZZLE ANSWERS

### TEAMS:

- > Richard (Team 6 of Series 1).
- > Rebecca (Team 5 of Series 8).
- > Akash (Team 6 of Series 2).
- >  $\frac{3}{4}$  (6 out of 8).
- > 3 boys, 1 girl (Team 7 of Series 4 and Team 8 of Series 5).
- > Two of: Maeve, Helen, Claire, Karen, Kelly, Julie.

### CHARACTERS:

- > Cedric.
- > Two of: Merlin, Lord Fear, Smirkenorff, Sylvester Hands.
- > Morghanna & Malice.
- > Malice, Stiletta or Honesty Bartram.
- > Lord Fear, with a total of 53 episodes (501-505, 507-508, 510-706, 708-810).
- > Motley (301-810).

### PUZZLES:

- > Six - Catherine, Jenna, Alex, Matt, Alan, Sofia.
- > Eight of Clubs, then Ten of Clubs or Joker.
- > BLOCK AND TACKLE.
- > DANIEL.
- > Three of: Path of Defence (not Aggression); Fire, Earth & Water; Rock, Paper & Scissors; Colour code - Red, Blue, Green & Grey.
- > Three.

### CREATURES:

- > Goblins.
- > Series 3, Level 2.
- > White wolves.
- > Hobgoblin.
- > LORD FEAR.
- > SKELETRON.